

*Maxim
Gorky*

*The City
of
the Yellow Devil*

Maxim Gorky, The City of the Yellow Devil

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*The City
of
the Yellow Devil*

*Pamphlets,
Articles and Letters
About America*



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In America

The City of the Yellow Devil

...Over earth and ocean hangs a fog well mixed with smoke, and a fine slow rain is falling over the dark buildings of the city and the muddy waters of the roadstead.

The immigrants gather at the ship's side and gaze silently about them with the curious eyes of hope and apprehension, fear and joy.

"Who's that?" a Polish girl asks softly, staring in wonder at the Statue of Liberty.

"The American god," someone replies.

The massive figure of the bronze woman is covered from head to foot with verdigris. The cold face stares blindly through the fog, out to the wastes of ocean, as though the bronze is waiting for the sun to bring sight to its sightless eyes. There is very little ground under Liberty's feet, she appears to rise from the ocean on a pedestal of petrified waves. Her arm, raised aloft over the ocean and the masts of the ships, gives a proud majesty and beauty to her pose. The torch so tightly gripped in her hand seems about to burst into a bright flame, driving away the grey smoke and bathing all around in fierce and joyous light.

And around that insignificant strip of land on which she stands, huge iron vessels glide over the waters like

prehistoric monsters, and tiny launches dart about like hungry beasts of prey. Sirens wail like fairy-tale giants, angry whistles shrill, anchor chains clang, and the ocean waves grimly slap against the shore.

Everything is running, hurrying, vibrating tensely. The screws and paddles of the steamers rapidly thresh the water which is covered with a yellow foam and seamed with wrinkles.

And everything—iron, stone, water and wood—seems to be protesting against a life without sunlight, without songs and happiness, in captivity to exhausting toil. Everything is groaning, howling, grating, in reluctant obedience to some mysterious force inimical to man. All over the bosom of the waters, ploughed and rent by iron, dirtied by greasy spots of oil, littered with chips and shavings, straw and remains of food, a cold and evil force labours unseen. Grimly and monotonously it operates this stupendous machine, in which ships and docks are only small parts, and man an insignificant screw, an invisible dot amid the unsightly, dirty tangle of iron and wood, the chaos of steamers, boats and barges loaded with cars.

Dazed, deafened by the noise, unnerved by this mad dance of inanimate matter, a two-legged creature, all sooty and oily, with his hands thrust deep in his pockets, stares curiously at me. There is a layer of greasy dirt on the face, relieved not by the gleam of human eyes but by the ivory of white teeth.

Slowly the steamer makes her way through the throng of vessels. The faces of the immigrants look strangely grey and dull, with something of a sheeplike sameness about the eyes. Gathered at the ship's side, they stare in silence at the fog.

In this fog something incomprehensibly vast, emitting a hollow murmur, is born; it grows, its heavy odorous breath is carried to the people and its voice has a threatening and avid note.

This is a city. This is New York. Twenty-storeyed houses, dark soundless skyscrapers, stand on the shore. Square,

lacking in any desire to be beautiful, the bulky, ponderous buildings tower gloomily and drearily. A haughty pride in its height, and its ugliness is felt in each house. There are no flowers at the windows and no children to be seen. . . .

From this distance the city seems like a vast jaw, with uneven black teeth. It breathes clouds of black smoke into the sky and puffs like a glutton suffering from his obesity.

Entering the city is like getting into a stomach of stone and iron, a stomach that has swallowed several million people and is grinding and digesting them.

The street is a slippery, greedy throat, in the depths of which float dark bits of the city's food—living people. Everywhere—overhead, underfoot, alongside, there is a clang of iron, exulting in its victory. Awakened to life and animated by the power of Gold, it casts its web about man, strangles him, sucks his blood and brain, devours his muscles and nerves, and grows and grows, resting upon voiceless stone, and spreading the links of its chain ever more widely.

Locomotives like enormous worms wriggle along, dragging cars behind them; the horns of the automobiles quack like fat ducks, electric wires hum drearily, the stifling air throbs with the thousands of strident sounds it has absorbed as a sponge absorbs moisture. Pressing down upon this grimy city, soiled with the smoke of factories, it hangs motionless among the high, soot-covered walls.

In the squares and small public gardens where the dusty leaves of the trees droop lifelessly on the branches, dark monuments rise. The faces of the statues are covered with a thick layer of dirt, the eyes that once glowed with love for their country are filled with the dust of the city. These bronze people, so lifeless and lonely amid the network of multi-storeyed buildings and no bigger than dwarfs in the dark shadow of the high walls, have lost their way in the chaos of madness around them, and stand half-blinded, watching mournfully, with aching hearts, the voracious bustle of the people at their feet. Little black figures hurry

fussily past the monuments, none of them ever casting a glance at the face of the hero. The ichthyosaurs of capital have erased from the people's memory the significance of those who created freedom.

The bronze men seem engrossed in one and the same sad thought:

"Is this the life I meant to create?"

Around them the fevered life seethes like soup on a stove, and the little people scurry and whirl, vanishing in the bubbling vortex like grains of meal in broth, like matchwood in the sea. The city bellows and swallows them up one after the other in its insatiable maw.

Some of the bronze heroes have dropped their hands, others have raised them, stretching them out over the heads of the people in warning:

"Stop! This is not life, this is madness. . . ."

All of them are superfluous in the chaos of street life, all are out of place in the savage howl of rapacity, in the cramped duress of this gloomy fantasy made of stone, glass and iron.

One night they will all descend from their pedestals and walk, with the heavy tread of the wronged, through the streets, taking the anguish of their loneliness away from this city, into the fields, where the moon is shining and there is fresh air and serene peace. When a man has toiled his whole life long for the good of his country, he has surely deserved this—that he should be left in peace after his death.

People hurry to and fro on the pavements, in every direction the streets take. They are sucked up by the deep pores in the stone walls. The exultant rumble of iron, the loud piercing whine of electricity, the clatter of work on some new steel construction or on new walls of stone, drown out human voices as a storm at sea drowns the cries of the birds.

The people's faces wear an expression of immobile calm; not one of them, apparently, is aware of his misfortune in being the slave of life, nourishment for the city monster.

In their pitiable arrogance they imagine themselves to be the masters of their fate; consciousness of their independence gleams occasionally in their eyes, but clearly they do not understand that this is only the independence of the axe in the carpenter's hand, the hammer in the smith's hand, the brick in the hand of that unseen bricklayer, who, with a sly chuckle, is building one vast but cramping prison for all. There are many virile faces among them, but in each face, one notices the teeth first of all. Inner freedom, the freedom of the spirit does not shine in these people's eyes. And their freedomless energy reminds one of the cold gleam of a knife that has not yet been blunted. It is the freedom of blind tools in the hands of the Yellow Devil—Gold.

This is the first time I have seen so monstrous a city, and never before have people seemed to me so insignificant, so enslaved. At the same time nowhere have I met people so tragically satisfied with themselves as are these in this voracious and filthy stomach of the glutton, who has grown into an imbecile from greed and, with the wild bellowing of an animal, devours brains and nerves. . . .

It is painful and dreadful to talk of the people.

Clanging and clattering, the car of the elevated railway rushes through the narrow street at the height of the third floor, past house walls covered with a monotonous tangle of fire escapes. Windows are open and figures can be seen in nearly every one of them. Some people are working, sewing or counting, their heads bent over their desks, others are simply sitting at the windows or leaning across the sills, watching the railway cars that flash past every minute. The old, the young and the children are silent, and uniformly unruffled. They have grown used to this effort for no purpose, grown used to thinking that it has a purpose. Their eyes hold no wrath at the domination of iron, no hatred for its triumph. The passage of the trains shakes the walls of the houses,—the women's bosoms, the men's heads, tremble; it shakes the bodies of children, sprawled on the balcony gratings accustomed them to take this

abominable life for granted, as inevitable. In brains that are constantly being shaken it is impossible, surely, for thoughts to weave their beautiful bold lace patterns, impossible for a living, daring dream to be born.

There is a passing glimpse of the dark face of an old woman in a dirty blouse open in front. The tortured, poisoned air, making way for the train, has rushed in terror into the windows, and the old woman's grizzled hair flaps like the wings of a grey bird. She has closed her dim, leaden eyes. And vanished.

In the obscurity of interiors one glimpses iron bedsteads heaped with rags, dirty dishes and remains of food on tables. One longs to see flowers in the windows, one looks out for someone reading a book. The walls flow by as though molten, an oncoming turbid flood, and in its swift flow the voiceless people swarm miserably.

A bald head gleams for an instant behind a dusty windowpane. The head nods above a workman's bench. A slim, red-haired girl sits in a window, knitting a sock, her dark eyes intent as she counts the stitches. The current of air has pushed her back from the window, but she does not raise her eyes from her work, nor smooth down the dress disarranged by the wind. Two little boys of about five are building a house of chips on a balcony. Their frail edifice collapses from the shaking. The children clutch at the chips to prevent them from slipping through the bars of the balcony into the street below, without looking at the railway which has thwarted their effort. Faces, more faces, one after another, seen momentarily at the windows, as broken fragments of one whole — of something large, but smashed into the tiniest splinters, ground into grains of sand.

Driven by the mad race of the trains, the air flutters the hair and clothing of the people, surges in a warm stuffy wave in their faces, thrusts and pushes thousands of sounds into their ears, flings fine biting dust into their eyes, blinds them, and deafens them with a wailing, unceasing howl. . . .

A living man, who thinks, who creates dreams, pictures and images in his own mind, who begets desires, who

yearns, wants, denies and waits,—a living man would be annoyed by this wild howling, screeching and roaring, this trembling of the stone walls, this timorous shivering of glass in window frames. Outraged, he would go out of his house and smash and destroy this abomination—the elevated; he would silence the insolent shriek of iron, for he is the master of life, life is for him, and all that hinders his life should be destroyed.

The people in the houses of the City of the Yellow Devil calmly endure all that kills man.

Below, in the dirt and dust of the pavements under the iron network of the elevated railway, children are playing voicelessly—voicelessly, though they laugh and shout like children all over the world, but their voices are drowned, like raindrops in the ocean, by the racket overhead. The children are like flowers tossed by a rough hand out of the window into the dirt of the street. Their bodies feed on the greasy exudations of the city, they are pale and sallow, their blood is poisoned, their nerves irritated by the malevolent screech of rusty metal, the mournful wail of trapped lightning.

Will these children grow up healthy, bold and proud?—one asks oneself. Grinding, guffawing, angry screeching is the only reply.

The trains rumble past East Side, the cesspool of the city where the poor live. Here the deep gutter-like streets lead people somewhere into the heart of the city where, one imagines, there must be a vast bottomless hole, a cauldron or a pan, into which all these people pour to have gold melted out of them. The gutter-like streets swarm with children.

I have seen a great deal of poverty in my life, I know its bloodless, bony green face well. I have seen its eyes everywhere, dull from hunger, and burning with greed, cunning and vengeful or slavishly meek and always inhuman, but the horrors of East Side poverty are more dismal than anything I have ever known.

In these streets, as tightly packed with people as sacks of meal, children search greedily in the dustbins on the sidewalks for rotten vegetables and devour them, mildew and all, on the spot, in this bitter dust and heat.

A crust of mouldy bread arouses the most savage enmity among them; possessed by the desire to devour it, they fight like little dogs. Like flocks of voracious pigeons they swarm the pavements; at one o'clock, two in the morning and even later, they are still grubbing in the filth, these pitiful microbes of poverty, a living reproach to the avarice of the wealthy slaves of the Yellow Devil.

At the corners of the littered streets stand a species of stoves or braziers, in which something is cooking; the steam, escaping through a thin pipe into the air, blows a little whistle at its tip. This thin piercing whistle dominates with its vibrating keenness all other street sounds, and drags on interminably like a cold dazzling white thread, twining itself about the throat, confusing the thoughts, maddening, impelling one somewhere and, never ceasing for a moment, quivers in the stench of decay that pollutes the air, it quivers mockingly, spitefully pervading that life lived in dirt.

Dirt is an element, it has impregnated everything: the walls of the houses, the glass in the windows, the people's clothing, the pores of their bodies, their brains, desires, thoughts. . . .

In these streets the dark hollows of the doorways are putrid wounds in the stones of the wall. When, glancing into them, one sees the filthy steps of the stairs, littered with refuse, it seems that everything within must have decayed into putrefaction as in the bowels of a corpse. And the people must be like worms. . . .

A tall woman with large dark eyes is standing in a doorway with a baby in her arms; her bodice is open, and the bluish breasts hang limply like long bags. The baby screams, scratching at the mother's jaded, hungry flesh, nuzzles her, making sucking sounds, then after a moment's silence, bursts into louder wailing, beating and kicking the mother's breast. She stands as though turned to stone, star-

ing with eyes as round as an owl's at some point in front of her. One feels that those eyes see nought but bread. Her lips are tightly compressed, she breathes through her nose, the nostrils quivering as she inhales the thick malodorous air of the street; this woman lives on memories of food eaten yesterday, dreams of the morsel she may chance to eat sometime in the future. The baby screams, its small, yellow body convulsed, but she does not hear the screams nor feel the feeble blows. . . .

An old man, hatless, tall, thin, grey, with a ravenous look, is cautiously grubbing in a rubbish heap, wrinkling the red lids of his sore eyes as he picks out bits of coal. When anyone comes near him, he turns round clumsily, like a wolf, and mutters something.

A youth, very pale and thin, slouches against the lamppost, his grey eyes looking along the street. From time to time he tosses his curly head. His hands are thrust deep in his trouser pockets, the fingers moving convulsively. . . .

Here in these streets, a man is conspicuous, and his voice, angry, irritable and revengeful, is heard. Here a man has a face—hungry, excited, anguished. That these people feel is obvious, that they think is noticeable. They swarm in the filthy gutters, rub up against one another like flotsam in a turbid stream; they are tossed and whirled by the force of hunger, they are animated by the acute desire for something to eat.

Meanwhile, dreaming of a meal and relishing the voluptuous pleasure of being satiated, they swallow the poison-laden air, and in the dark depths of their souls sharp thoughts, cunning emotions, and criminal desires are born.

They are like disease germs in the stomach of the city, and the time will come when they will infect it with those same noxious poisons it so generously nourishes them with now!

The youth leaning against the lamppost shakes his head from time to time. His hungry teeth are tightly clenched. I believe I understand what he is thinking of, what he wants—to possess enormous hands of frightful strength and wings on his back, that is what he wants, I believe. So

that, soaring one day over the city, he may reach down with hands like steel levers and reduce the whole to a heap of rubbish and ashes, mixing bricks and pearls, gold and the flesh of slaves, glass and millionaires, dirt, idiots, temples, the dirt-poisoned trees, and these foolish multi-storeyed skyscrapers, everything, the whole city into one heap, into a dough compounded of dirt and the blood of people,—into a loathsome chaos. This frightful wish is as natural in this youth's brain as a sore on the body of a sick man. Where there is much slave work, there can be no place for free, creative thought, and only the ideas of destruction, the poisonous flowers of vengeance, the turbulent protest of the brute beast can flourish. This is understandable—if you warp a man's soul you must not expect mercy from him.

Man has the right to vengeance—that right has been given him by men.

The day fades in the dull soot-clouded sky. The huge houses grow gloomier and more ponderous. Here and there lights twinkle in their dark depths, shining like the yellow eyes of strange beasts who have to keep watch all night by the dead riches stored in these tombs.

People have finished the day's work and—never thinking of why it was done, or whether it was any use to them—hurry home to bed. Dark streams of humans flood the sidewalks. All the heads are covered by the same round hats, and all the brains—as may be seen from the eyes—are already asleep. Work is done, there is nothing more to think about. Their thinking belongs to their boss, what is there to think about themselves. If there is work there will be bread and the cheap enjoyments of life, beyond which man needs nothing more in the City of the Yellow Devil.

People go to their beds, to their women, to their men, and slippery with sweat they will make love in those stuffy rooms at night, so that new, fresh nourishment may be born for the city....

They go. No laughter or cheerful talk is heard, smiles do not sparkle here.

The automobiles quack, the whips crack, the electric cables hum, the trains clatter. Music is played somewhere too, no doubt.

The newsboys yell out the names of the papers. The wretched sound of the hurdy-gurdy and someone's scream merge in the tragicomic embrace of the murderer and the show-booth comedian. The little people move listlessly like stones rolling downhill....

More and more of the yellow lights flare up—now entire walls blaze with impassioned words about beer, whiskey, soap, new razors, hats, cigars and shows. The clang of iron, driven everywhere along the streets by the insatiable goading of Gold, never dies down. Now, when lights blaze everywhere, this unrelenting howl gains in significance, acquires new meaning, a new and more oppressive power.

The dazzling effulgence of molten Gold pours from the walls of the houses, from shop signs and the windows of restaurants. Insolent, blatant, it triumphs everywhere, making the eyes smart, distorting faces with its cold glitter. This cunning radiance is possessed of a fierce lust to draw the insignificant grains of their earnings out of the people's pockets, and it puts this lust into winking words that silently beckon workers to cheap pleasures and offer them handy knick-knacks....

There is a terrifying abundance of light in this city. At first it seems attractive, it excites and delights. Light is a free element, the proud child of the sun. When it comes to a luxuriant flowering, its blossoms vibrate and live, more lovely than any flowers on earth, it cleanses life, it can destroy all that is outworn, dead and foul.

But, in this city, when one looks at light, enclosed in transparent prisons of glass, one understands that here light, like everything else, is enslaved. It serves Gold, it is for Gold and is inimically aloof from people....

Like everything—iron, stone, wood—light is a party to the conspiracy against man; dazzling him, it calls:

"Come here!"

And wheedles him:

"Hand over your cash!"

People respond to this summons, buy rubbish they do not need and watch shows that only dull their wits.

It is as if, somewhere in the heart of the city, a huge lump of Gold were spinning at a terrific pace with voluptuous squeals, powdering the streets with the finest particles, which people catch and seek and clutch at eagerly all day long. But evening falls at last, the lump of Gold begins to spin in the opposite direction, raising a cold blazing whirlwind, drawing people into it so that they will give back the gold dust they caught during the day. They always give back more than they got and next morning the lump of Gold has grown larger, it revolves at a swifter pace, and the exultant screech of iron, its slave, the clang of all the forces it has enslaved, sound louder still.

Then even more voraciously, with even greater gusto than the previous day, it sucks the blood and brain of people so that by evening this same blood and brain, are converted into cold yellow metal. The lump of Gold is the heart of the city. All the life of the city is in its throbbing, all the meaning of this life is in its growth.

It is for this that, day after day, people dig the earth, forge iron, build houses, breathe the smoke of factories, absorb through the pores of their bodies the dirt of the polluted air, it is for this that they sell their beautiful bodies.

The vile wizardry lulls their souls; makes them flexible tools in the hands of the Yellow Devil, the ore out of which he smelts unceasingly the Gold that is his flesh and blood.

Night comes in from the desert of the ocean and wafts a cool, salty breath over the city. The cold lights pierce it with a thousand arrows; it stalks on, benignantly cloaking with its dark vestments the ugliness of houses and the gruesomeness of the narrow streets, and veiling the squalid rags of poverty. A savage wail of greedy madness rushes out to meet it, rending its silence; still it moves on, slowly extinguishing the insolent glitter of the enslaved light and shading with its soft hand the purulent ulcers of the city.

But as it enters the maze of the streets it finds itself pow-

erless to vanquish and scatter with its fresh breath the city's poisonous vapours. It rubs against the stone of the walls, warmed by the sun, it creeps over the rusty iron of the roofs, over the filth of the pavements, and, saturated with the poisonous dust, gorged with the city smells, it folds its wings and comes to rest limp and motionless on the housetops and in the gutters. Darkness is all that remains of it—its freshness and coolness are gone, swallowed up by stone, iron, wood, and the people's polluted lungs. It has no stillness any more, no poetry. . . .

The city falls asleep in the oppressive darkness, growling like some huge animal. It had devoured too much food during the day, it feels hot and uncomfortable, and its slumbers are disturbed by nightmares.

Flickering, the light goes out, its shabby job of provocateur and advertisement lackey done for the day. The houses suck people in one after another, into their stone bowels.

A gaunt man, tall and stooped, stands on a street corner and, turning his head slowly, looks with dull, colourless eyes to right and left of him. Where is he to go? All the streets are alike, and all the houses, their windows bleary and lacklustre, stare at one another with the same lifeless apathy. . . .

A stifling nostalgia clutches at the throat with a warm hand, making it difficult to breathe. Over the roofs of the houses hovers a hazy cloud—the day's vapours of this wretched, accursed city. Through this misty veil, in the remote infinity of the heavens, the peaceful stars gleam faintly.

The man takes off his hat, raises his head, and looks up at the sky. The immense height of the houses in this city has pushed the sky further away from the earth than anywhere else in the world. The stars are tiny, lonely specks.

From afar, alarmingly, comes a brassy blare. The man's long legs jerk queerly and he turns into one of the streets, stepping slowly, his head bent and his arms swinging. It is late, and the streets grow more and more deserted. Lonely little people disappear like flies, and are swallowed up by the darkness. Policemen in grey hats stand motionless at

street corners with clubs in their hands. They chew tobacco, their jaws moving slowly.

The man walks past them, past the telephone poles and the multitude of black doors in the walls of the houses—black doors, their square jaws yawning sleepily. Somewhere far away a streetcar clatters and wails. The night suffocates in the deep cages of the streets, the night is dead.

The man walks with measured stride, swaying his long, bent frame. There is something about him showing a mind at work, something undecided, yet decisive. . . .

I think he is a thief.

It is good to see a man who feels himself alive in the dark toils of the city.

The open windows let out the nauseating smell of human sweat.

Strange, dull sounds stir drowsily in the stifling, dreary darkness. . . .

Asleep and muttering deliriously in its sleep is the lurid City of the Yellow Devil.

1906

Realm of Boredom

When night falls a phantom city of lights rears itself skyward on the ocean. A myriad of glowing sparks scintillate in the darkness, tracing with exquisite subtlety against the dark background of the sky stately turrets of wondrous castles, palaces and temples of coloured crystal. A golden cobweb quivers in the air, weaves itself into a translucent pattern of fire and hangs motionless admiring the beauty of its reflection in the water. Enchanting and incomprehensible is this fire, which burns but does not devour; inexpressibly beautiful is its magnificent, barely perceptible shimmer that creates a magic spectacle of a city of fire amid the bare expanses of sky and ocean. Over it hovers a ruddy glow, and the water gives back its contours, merging them in fantastic splashes of molten gold. . . .

This play of lights gives rise to curious thoughts: one

feels that yonder in the halls of the palaces, amid the bright radiance of fiery exultation, the soft, proud accents of music such as was never heard before must sound. Like winged stars, the noblest thoughts on earth must be carried on the crest of this lovely melody. They touch one another in this divine dance and, blazing forth in a momentary embrace, conceive a new radiance, new thoughts.

One feels that there in that velvety darkness some great cradle, miraculously woven of golden threads, flowers and stars, rocks gently on the swaying breast of the ocean, and in it the sun reposes till morn.

The sun brings man closer to reality. By daylight the fabulous city of fire is seen as nought but a collection of white airy buildings.

The blue haze of the ocean's breath mixes with the thick, grey smoke of the city; the delicate white structures are enveloped in a transparent veil, and like a mirage they quiver alluringly, beckoning and promising something beautiful and soothing. .

There in the background amid the clouds of smoke and dust crouch the rectangular buildings of the city that fills the air with its insatiable, hungrily-avid roar. This tense noise that causes the air and the soul to shudder, this persistent shrieking of taut steel strings, the dreary lament of the forces of life ground down by the power of Gold, the cold, mocking whistle of the Yellow Devil—this sound drives one away from the earth crushed and befouled by the stinking body of the city. And so people go to the shore of the ocean where stand these handsome white buildings holding promise of peace and quiet.

They stand close together on a long sand spit plunged like a sword deep into the dark waters. The sand sparkles warmly in the sunshine and the diaphanous buildings look like exquisite white silk embroidery on yellow velvet. It is as though someone had come down to the sand spit and plunged into the waters, tossing his rich raiment on their bosom.

One is seized with the desire to go and touch the soft, caressing fabrics, to stretch oneself out on their luxurious folds and feast one's eyes on the vast expanse where white birds dart about swiftly and noiselessly, where ocean and sky slumber in the burning glare of the sun.

.

This is Coney Island.

On Mondays the city's newspapers triumphantly inform the reader:

"Yesterday 300,000 people visited Coney Island. Twenty-three children were lost."

...It is a long journey by streetcar through the dusty, noisy streets of Brooklyn and Long Island to the dazzling splendour of Coney Island. And, indeed, as soon as a man stands before the entrance to this city of lights he is blinded. It flings hundreds of thousands of cold white sparks into his eyes, and for a long time he cannot make out anything in the dazzling dust; everything about him is a stormy maelstrom of fiery froth, everything whirls, glitters and beckons. The man is stunned at once, his mind is blotted out by all this brilliance, all thought is driven out of his head and he becomes a particle of the crowd. Their minds reeling, people wander aimlessly amid the scintillating lights. An opaque white mist penetrates their brain, a feeling of eager anticipation lays a viscid shroud over the soul. Dazzled by the glitter, the crowd of people pours, a dark stream, into the motionless pool of light hemmed in on all sides by the dark frontiers of the night.

Tiny lamps shed a cold dry light over everything: they are attached to all the poles and walls, to the window frames and cornices of buildings, they stretch in even rows along the tall chimney of the power station, they burn on all the roofs, they scratch at the eyes of the people with sharp needles of lifeless brilliance—the people blink and, smiling stupidly, drag themselves slowly over the ground like the heavy links in some tangled chain...

It takes a great effort of will for a man to find himself

in this crowd, crushed by wonder in which there is no delight or joy. And he who does find himself sees that these millions of lamps shed a dreary, denuding light that, while hinting at the possibility of beauty, lays bare the stupid, dismal ugliness all around. A phantom from afar, the magic city is now seen as a meaningless labyrinth of straight lines in wood, cheap, hastily-built structures put up to amuse children, the considered work of some old pedagogue who is worried by the escapades of the children and wants to teach them humility and meekness even through their toys. There is an ugly variety about the dozens of white buildings, and not one of them has even a hint of beauty. They are made of wood, covered with peeling white paint, and all seem to be suffering from the same skin disease. The tall towers and low colonnades stretch in two deadly even lines and huddle tastelessly together. Everything is stripped bare and robbed by the impartial glitter of the lights; it is everywhere, and there are no shadows. Every building stands like some gaping fool with its mouth hanging open, and within one glimpses a cloud of smoke, hears the raucous howls of brass and the whining of the organ, and sees the dark figures of people. People eating, drinking and smoking.

But Man is not heard. The air is filled with the even hissing of the arc lights, ragged fragments of music, the pious whining of wooden pipes and the thin, incessant whistle of braziers. All this merges in an irritating hum as of some invisible string, thick and taut, and when a human voice does invade this incessant hum it sounds like a frightened whisper. Everything glitters insolently, baring its dismal ugliness...

The soul is gripped by a burning desire for a live, red, flowering flame that would deliver people from the bondage of this mottled boredom that deafens and blinds... One would wish to set fire to all this prettiness, and to dance in wild abandon, to shout and sing in the boisterous play of the colourful tongues of a living flame, to revel in a voluptuous feast of destruction of the lifeless magnificence of spiritual poverty...

Coney Island has indeed hundreds of thousands of people in its thrall. They swarm like clouds of black flies over the whole of its vast area, closely packed with white cage-like structures, and in all the halls of the buildings. Pregnant women placidly carry the weight of their bellies before them. Children walk along gaping in silence and staring with dazzled eyes around them so intently and gravely that one aches with pity for them, because they nourish their souls with ugliness which they mistaken for beauty. The clean-shaven faces of the men, looking strangely alike, are stolid and heavy. Most of them have brought along their wives and children, and they regard themselves as the benefactors of their families for providing them not only with bread but with magnificent spectacles besides. They themselves like this glitter, but they are too serious to give vent to their feelings and hence they all compress their thin lips and narrow their eyes and frown with the air of persons whom nothing can impress. Yet behind this outward composure born of mature experience one feels a burning eagerness to taste all the pleasures the magic town has to offer. And so these respectable people, with deprecating smiles calculated to hide the glow of pleasure that lights up their eyes, climb onto the backs of the wooden horses and elephants of the electric merry-go-round, and, swinging their legs, wait in excited anticipation for the keen pleasure of being whirled over the rails, tossed upwards and dropped down again whistling through the air. This bumpy journey completed, they stretch the skin tightly over their faces again and move on to other pleasures. . . .

The entertainments are innumerable: on the top of an iron tower slowly swing two long white wings to the ends of which are attached cages with people in them. When one of the wings soars heavily skywards, the faces of the people in the cages grow painfully serious, and with identical expressions they stare in tense, round-eyed silence at the receding earth. And in the cages of the other wing, which is carefully descending at the same time, the faces of the people blossom out in smiles, and squeals of delight

are heard. The sound reminds one of the joyous squeal of a puppy when he is put down on the floor after having been held in the air by the scruff of his neck.

Boats fly in the air around the tip of another tower, a third, revolving, sets in motion some metal cylinders, a fourth and a fifth—they all move, ablaze, and beckon to the people with the soundless shout of their cold lights. Everything swings, squeals, booms, making the people dizzy and complacently dull, exhausting their nerves with the tortuous maze of movement and glitter of lights. Light eyes grow lighter as though the brain were turning pale, drained of blood in the weird weaving of white sparking wood. And it seems that boredom, expiring under the burden of self-aversion, is whirling round and round in a slow agony, drawing into its melancholy dance tens of thousands of monotonously dark people, sweeping them, as the wind sweeps the rubbish on the streets, into docile heaps, and scattering them again only to sweep them together once more. . . .

Pleasures await the people inside the buildings as well, but these are serious pleasures, they educate. Here the people are shown Hell with its austere regime, and the diverse torments that await men and women who violate the sanctity of the laws that have been made for them. . . .

Hell is made of papier-mâché painted a dull crimson, the whole steeped in a fireproof substance exuding the foul odour of some heavy fat. Hell is very badly made—it will arouse disgust even in the most inexacting spectator. It represents a cave chaotically strewn with boulders and filled with a reddish gloom. On one of the boulders sits Satan in scarlet tights, contorting his gaunt brown face into diverse grimaces, and rubbing his hands like a man who has just brought off a good business deal. He is no doubt most uncomfortable seated on that pasteboard boulder which creaks and sways under him, but he appears oblivious of the fact, his attention being absorbed by the torments his devils are inflicting on the sinners at his feet.

Here is a young girl who has bought herself a new hat

and is happily admiring herself in the mirror. A couple of small and apparently very hungry devils steal up to her from behind and seize her by the arms; she cries out, but too late! The devils lay her in a long, smooth chute which descends steeply into a pit in the middle of the cave; grey vapour issues from the pit, tongues of red-paper flame rise up, and down the chute into this pit slides the girl along with the mirror and hat.

A young man drinks a glass of whiskey—the devils immediately dispatch him too into the hole under the stage.

It is stuffy in Hell, the devils are puny and feeble; they appear to be utterly worn out by their work, its monotony and obvious uselessness clearly irritates them, and hence they handle the sinners roughly, tossing them into the chute like logs of wood. Looking at them you want to shout:

"Enough of this nonsense! Why don't you go on strike, boys!"

A young girl steals a few coins from her neighbour's purse, only to be instantly disposed of by the devils, much to the satisfaction of Satan who swings his legs in delight and giggles nasally. The devils throw angry looks at the idler and malevolently hurl into the maw of the fiery pit everyone who—either on business or out of idle curiosity—happens to look into Hell. . . .

The public regards these horrors in grave silence. It is dark in the hall. A hefty young man with curly hair and wearing a thick jacket delivers a harangue in a deep voice of gloom.

Pointing to the stage he preaches that if people do not want to fall victim to the bow-legged Satan in the red tights, they should know that it is wrong to kiss girls without being wedded to them, otherwise the girls may become prostitutes; it is wrong to kiss young men without the sanction of the church because little boys and girls may be born as a result; prostitutes must not steal money from their clients' pockets; people in general ought not drink wine and any other liquids that excite the passions; they must go to church and not to bars, it is better for the soul and cheaper. . . .

He says all this in a dreary, monotonous voice and it is evident that he himself does not believe in the kind of life he has been instructed to advocate.

One is sorely tempted to say to the proprietors of this edifying entertainment for sinners:

"Gentlemen! If you want your sermons to purge the human soul, if only as effectively as castor oil, you must pay your preachers more!"

At the conclusion of this awesome performance a nauseatingly handsome angel appears from a corner of the cave. He is strung up a wire and moves through the air across the entire cave holding a wooden trumpet covered with gilt paper between his teeth. On sighting him Satan darts like a frog into the pit after the sinners, there is a crackling noise, the pasteboard boulders roll one atop the other, the devils scamper off happily to relax from their labours—and the curtain falls. The crowd rises and leaves the hall. A few make so bold as to laugh, but the majority are grave. Perhaps they are thinking: "If Hell is so horrible, maybe it's better not to sin."

They move on. In the next building they are shown "The Hereafter". This is a large institution, also of papier-mâché, representing pits in which the badly-dressed souls of the dead roam about aimlessly. You may wink at them, but you must not pinch them—that is quite clear. It must be extremely dull for them in the gloom of the subterranean labyrinth amid the rough walls that are dampened by a cold stream of moist air. Some of the souls have bad coughs, others silently chew tobacco, ejecting streams of yellow spittle onto the ground; one soul, leaning against the wall in a corner, is smoking a cigar. . . .

As you pass them they look at you with their colourless eyes, and, tightly compressing their lips, hide their chilly hands in the grey folds of their unearthly rags. They are hungry, these poor souls, and many of them are clearly afflicted with rheumatism. The public stares silently at them and, inhaling the moist air, nourishes its soul on dreary boredom that extinguishes thought like a filthy wet rag thrown onto feebly smouldering embers. . . .

In another building you can see "The Flood" which, as everyone knows, was sent to punish people for their sins. . . .

Indeed all the sights in this city have a single aim: to show people how and wherewith they will be punished for their sins after death, to teach them to live on earth meekly and to obey laws. . . .

"Thou shalt not!" is their one commandment.

The overwhelming majority of the visitors are working folk, you see.

But money must be made, and so in the quiet corners of the glittering city, as everywhere on this earth, lust mocks at hypocrisy and lies. Of course, it is concealed and, naturally, it is dull, for it too is "for the people". It has been organised as a profitable business, an instrument for extracting a man's pay from his pocket and permeated as it is with a passion for gold, it is triply odious and repulsive in this quagmire of scintillating dullness. . . .

The people feed on it. . . .

... They flow in a dense stream between two rows of brightly-lit buildings and the buildings swallow them up in their hungry maws. The buildings on the right terrorise them with the horrors of eternal torment, proclaiming: "Do not sin! It is dangerous!"

In a spacious dance hall to the left women circle slowly on the floor and everything about the establishment urges: "Sin! It is pleasant. . . ."

Blinded by the glitter of lights, tempted by the cheap but dazzling luxury, intoxicated by the din, the people circle in the slow dance of gnawing boredom and readily, blindly, go to the left—to sin—and to the right—into the houses that preach piety.

This stupefying toing and froing is equally profitable to the traders in morals and the merchants of vice.

Life is ordered so that people shall work six days and sin on the seventh. They shall pay for their sins, repent and pay for the penance; and that's all.

The arc lights hiss like so many hundreds of thousands of angry snakes, and the dark fly-swarms of people buzz with a dreary impotence as they slowly swirl, caught in the gleaming, fine cobweb of the buildings. Without haste, without a smile on their smooth-shaven faces, they indolently enter every door, linger in front of the animal cages, chew tobacco and spit.

In a huge cage a man chases some Bengal tigers around, firing a revolver and mercilessly lashing them with a fine whip. The handsome beasts, maddened with fear, blinded by the lights, deafened by the music and the shooting, race wildly to and fro among the iron rods, roaring and growling, their green eyes flashing; their lips quiver, exposing angry fangs, and now one, now another paw hits viciously at the air. But the man fires into their eyes and the loud reports of the blank shells and the searing pain of the lash drives the powerful, sinuous body of the beast into a corner of the cage. Seized by a paroxysm of wrathful indignation, by the bitter resentment of the strong, choking with the anguish of humiliation, the captive beast freezes momentarily in his corner and, the snakelike tail twitching nervously, stares before him with frenzied eyes. . . .

The supple body tenses into a hard bundle of muscle and quivers, ready to pounce and sink its claws into the flesh of the man with the whiplash, to tear him to pieces, to destroy him. . . .

The hind legs twitch like springs, the neck stretches out, and blood-red sparks of joy dance in the green eyes.

The colourless, coldly expectant gaze of the uniformly sallow faces that merge into a dull coppery blotch beyond the bars of the cage pierces the pupils of the beast with hundreds of blunt jabs.

Terrifying in its lifeless immobility, the face of the multitude waits—the crowd too wants to see blood and is waiting for it, waiting not out of a desire for vengeance, but out of curiosity as a wild beast that has long been tamed might wait.

The tiger draws its head into its shoulders, widens its eyes in anguish, and with a soft, rippling movement draws

back its body as if its hide, feverish with the thirst for revenge, were doused suddenly with an icy shower.

The man fires, cracks his whip, shouts like a madman—he shouts to hide his deadly terror in the face of the tiger and his slavish anxiety to please the herd that calmly watches his capers, tensely awaiting the fatal leap of the beast. He waits, a primitive instinct has awakened in him: he thirsts for battle, longs to experience the orgasm when the two bodies will clinch, blood will spurt, steaming human flesh will fly to the floor of the cage, and a roar and a scream will rend the air. . . .

But the brain of the herd has already been permeated with the poison of diverse interdictions and fears; though it thirsts for blood, the crowd is afraid, it both wants it and does not want it, and in this dark contest with itself it finds keen delight—it lives. . . .

The man has terrorised all the animals, the tigers retreat on padded feet to the back of the cage, and he, perspiring and relieved that today he has survived, smiles with pallid lips whose trembling he endeavours to conceal, and bows to the copper face of the crowd as if paying obeisance to an idol.

The multitude bellows and claps its hands and breaks up into dark clots, to continue crawling over the sticky mire of the boredom around it. . . .

Having relished to the full the spectacle of man's contest with the beasts, the herd goes on in search of some other amusement. Here is the circus. In the centre of the ring a man tosses two children into the air with his long legs. The children flash above him like two white doves with broken wings; every now and then they miss the man's feet, drop on to the ground and, casting a fearful glance at the upturned blood-suffused face of their father or employer, they go spinning in the air again. A crowd has gathered around the ring. They all stare. And when one of the children misses the artist's foot, a tremor of animation flits over all these faces the way a light breeze ripples the somnolent water of a muddy puddle.

It would be a welcome relief to see a drunk with a beam-

ing face come rolling along, jostling, singing, shouting, happy because he is drunk and wishing all good people the same from the bottom of his heart. . . .

Music strikes up, ripping the air to ribbons. The band is bad and the musicians tired, the notes blared forth lack cohesion, limping and unable to keep in step; they race along in a broken line, jostling, overtaking and upsetting one another. For some reason the imagination pictures each note as a sheet of tin to which human likeness has been imparted—a mouth, eyes and an opening for the nose cut out, and long white ears attached. The man swinging a baton over the heads of the musicians who do not pay any attention to him, seizes these bits of metal by the handle-like ears and invisibly hurls them aloft. They clash with one another, the air whistles in the mouth slits, and this produces music from which even the circus horses inured to everything, shy away in fright, twitching their ears nervously as if to shake out the prickly, tinny sounds. . . .

Curious fantasies are born of this music of beggars for the amusement of slaves. One wants to wrest the biggest of the brass horns from the hands of its player and to blow into it with all one's might, to blow a blast so long and loud and terrifying that all should flee from captivity impelled by the horror of that wild sound. . . .

Near the orchestra is a cage with bears. One of them, a fat, brown animal with tiny, crafty eyes, stands in the centre of the cage and shakes his head in measured rhythm. He seems to be thinking:

"I can accept this as rational only if I am shown that it has all been arranged deliberately in order to blind people and to deafen and cripple them. In that case, of course, the end justifies the means. . . . But if people sincerely believe that all this is amusing, I have no more faith in their mental powers! . . ."

Two other bears sit opposite each other as if playing chess. A fourth, with a serious mien, scrapes at some straw in a corner of the cage, his black claws catching in the bars. There is a look of calm resignation on his face. Evidently

he expects nothing of this life and has decided to go to sleep. . . .

The animals evoke keen interest—the watery eyes of the people follow their every movement as if searching for something long-forgotten in the powerful movements of the graceful bodies of the lions and panthers. Standing before the cages, people silently poke sticks through the bars and jab the animals in the stomach or the sides, curious to see what will happen.

Those of the beasts that have not yet learned the character of humans grow indignant, strike at the bars with their paws and roar, opening wide jaws trembling with rage. This pleases the crowd. Protected by iron from the blows of the animals, sure of their safety, people calmly look into the bloodshot eyes and smile with satisfaction. But most of the beasts disregard the humans. Given a jab with a stick or spat at, they get up slowly and without as much as a glance at the tormentor withdraw to a far corner of the cage. There in the gloom lie the powerful, graceful bodies of the lions, tigers, panthers and leopards and through the darkness their eyes glow with the green fire of contempt for men. . . .

And the people, after another look at them, walk away saying:

"That animal's no fun."

In front of the band which plays with desperate zeal at the half-open entrance to some dark yawning maw inside which the backs of the chairs jut like rows of teeth—in front of the musicians stands a pole to which two monkeys, a female and infant, are tied with a thin chain. The infant clings to its mother's breast, its long skinny arms wound round her neck and the tiny fingers locked behind. The mother holds the infant tight with one arm while the other is stretched out warily with the fingers crooked ready to scratch and strike. The mother's eyes tensely dilated, they express an impotent despair, an anguished anticipation of unavoidable injury, a weary anger and resentment. The infant, its cheek pressed against the mother's breast, looks with cold horror out of the corner of its eye at the people—

it has evidently known fear from the very first day of its life and fear has petrified within it for the rest of its days. The mother, baring her small white teeth, and not for a second removing the arm that holds the small body close to hers, with the other ceaselessly wards off the sticks and umbrellas poked at her by the spectators of her agony.

There are so many of these white-skinned savages, men and women, in bowlers and hats with feathers, and they all find it frightfully amusing to see how agilely the mother monkey defends her child from the blows aimed at its little body. . . .

The monkey moves swiftly on a round surface the size of a plate, risking any moment to fall under the feet of the spectators, and she indefatigably repels all who seek to lay hands on her babe. Now and again, failing to parry a blow, she emits a piteous wail. Her arm swings around like a whip, but there are so many spectators, and each one of them is so anxious to strike, to pull the monkey's tail, or jerk the chain around her neck, that she cannot cope with them all. And her eyes flutter piteously, and lines of pain and misery appear around her mouth.

The infant's arms press against her breast, it clings so tightly to her that its fingers are almost hidden in the mother's thin fur. Its eyes stare fixedly at the yellow blobs of faces, the dim eyes of the people who derive pleasure from its horror of them. . . .

Now and again one of the musicians trains the foolish brass mouth of his trumpet at the monkey, drenching her with raucous sound—she cringes, bares her teeth and turns her sharp eyes on the tormentor. . . .

The crowd laughs and nods to the musician in approval. He is pleased, and a moment later he repeats his performance.

There are women among the spectators; some of them doubtless are mothers. Yet not one of them utters a word in protest against this vicious entertainment. They all enjoy it.

Some eyes seem ready to burst with the strain of watching the torments of the mother monkey and the wild horror of the child.

Next to the band is the cage of the elephant, an elderly gentleman with shabby, shiny skin on his head. He has thrust his trunk through the bars of his cage and is swaying it reflectively as he watches the public. And being a kind and sensible animal, he is thinking:

"Of course, this scum that has been swept this way by the filthy broom of boredom is capable of mocking even its own prophets—as I have heard aged elephants say. Yet I cannot help feeling sorry for the monkey.... I have heard, too, that men, like the jackals and hyenas, sometimes, tear each other to pieces but alas that does not make it any easier for the monkey!"

...One looks at those eyes stark with the grief of a mother, helpless to protect her child, and at the eyes of the infant frozen with a deep, cold horror of humans, one looks at people who find pleasure in tormenting a living creature, and turning to the monkey, one murmurs:

"Animal! Forgive them! In time they will grow better...."

It is ridiculous and foolish, of course. And useless. Is there a mother who could forgive the torturers of her child; there are no such mothers I think, not even among dogs....

Pigs, perhaps....

Well, well....

And so—when night comes—an enchanted phantom city of lights blazes forth on the shore of the ocean. It glows for a long time—without burning—against the dark background of the nocturnal sky, its beauty reflected in the shining expanse of the ocean.

In the brilliant cobweb of translucent buildings tens of thousands of grey people with colourless eyes crawl about tediously, like lice in a beggar's rags.

The avid and the base show them the disgusting nakedness of their lies and the naiveté of their cunning, their hypocrisy, and the insatiable power of their greed. The cold gleam of the dead light lays bare the intellectual poverty, which with a triumphant glitter has laid its stamp on everything around these people....

But the people have been dazzled so thoroughly that in silent delight they quaff the evil potion that poisons their souls.

Boredom moves slowly in a sluggish dance, expiring in the agony of its own impotence.

The only good thing about that city of lights is that you can steep your soul in lifelong hatred for the power of stupidity....

1906

The Mob

...The window of my room overlooks a square; all day long people pour into it from five streets very much like potatoes rolling out of sacks. They mill around and then scurry on, and again the streets suck them into their gullets. The square is round and filthy, like a pan long used for frying meat but never yet scoured. Four streetcar lines lead into this crowded circle and almost every minute cars jammed with people come rolling in, screeching on the turns. They rush along with a hasty, troubled clang of iron while above them and under their wheels sounds the harrowing drone of electricity. The dusty air is charged with the sickly rattling of their windowpanes and the shrill squeak of their wheels against the rails. The infernal music of the city wails incessantly—a savage battle of raucous sounds that stab and choke one another, evoking strange and sombre fantasies.

...A mob of frenzied monsters armed with huge tongs and knives and saws and everything else that can be made of iron, writhes like a mass of worms, eddies in dark insanity over the body of a woman whom it has clutched with its greedy hands and thrown to the ground, into the dirt and dust—and it tears at her breasts, cuts her flesh, drinks her blood, rapes her, and fights over her blindly, hungrily, tirelessly.

Who this woman is cannot be seen; she is buried under a huge dirt-yellow mass of people who have fastened themselves on her from every side, twining their bony bodies

around her, clinging wherever there is room for their greedy lips, and sucking the lifeblood from every pore of her body. . . . In the throes of a voracious and indefatigable craving, they kick one another away from their prey, strike, trample, crush and destroy one another. Each one wants as much as he can get, and they all tremble in a feverish paroxysm of fear lest they be left with nothing. They gnash their teeth, the iron clangs in their hands; moans of pain, howls of greed, cries of disappointment, the roar of hungry, rage—all this merges in a funereal wail over the corpse of the murdered prey, which lies torn and despoiled by thousands of rapes, and sullied by all the multicoloured filth of the earth.

And merging with this savage wail is the miserable anguish of the defeated, who have been kicked aside and now slobber repulsively in hungry longing for the joy of a full stomach; weak and cowardly, they cannot fight for it.

That is the picture drawn by the music of the city.

It is Sunday. People do not work.

Because of this many faces wear downcast, perplexed, almost worried, looks. Yesterday had a simple and definite meaning—they worked from morning till evening. They woke up at the usual hour and went to the factory or office or out into the street. They stood or sat in customary and therefore comfortable places. They counted money, sold goods, dug earth, chopped wood, cut stone, drilled and forged—they worked with their hands all day. They went to bed feeling a familiar weariness—and today they have awakened to find idleness staring them questioningly in the eye, demanding that its void be filled. . . .

They were taught to work but not to live, and so the day of rest is a hard day for them. Tools quite capable of creating machines, cathedrals, great ships and pretty little knickknacks of gold, they do not feel themselves capable of filling in the day with anything except their everyday mechanical work. Cogs and wheels, they feel they are human beings in the factories, offices and shops; there they join with cogs and wheels like themselves to make up one

harmonious organism which busily creates values from the living fluid of its nerves—but not for itself.

Six days of the week life is simple. It is a huge machine, and they all are its cogs; each knows his place in it and each assumes that he is familiar with and understands its blind, grimy face. But on the seventh day—the day of rest and idleness—life looms before him in a strange dismantled guise. Its face breaks up—it loses its face. . . .

They roam the streets, they sit in the saloons and in the park, they go to church, they stand on street corners. There is movement, as usual, but one feels that in a minute, or perhaps in an hour, it will stop in suspense—something is lacking in life, and something new is striving to enter it. No one is quite conscious of this feeling, no one can express it in words, but everyone is painfully aware of something unusual and disturbing. All the small, intelligible meanings have suddenly fallen out of life, like teeth out of gums.

People stroll along the streets; they board streetcars, they chat; outwardly they are composed—there are fifty-two Sundays in a year, and they have long since developed the habit of spending them all in the same manner. But everyone feels that he is different from what he was yesterday, and that his comrade is not the same, either—somewhere inside there is a gnawing, throbbing emptiness, and from within it something obscure, troubling—terrifying, perhaps—may all of a sudden emerge. . . .

Each senses a covert doubt stir within himself, and instinctively he tries to avoid facing it. . . .

Impulsively they huddle close to one another, merge into groups; they stand silently on street corners, staring at what goes on about them; more and more living segments come up to them, and the striving of the parts to make a whole creates a mob.

. . . Unhurriedly the men fall in with one another. A common feeling, a troubled hollowness within the breast, draws them into a heap—as a magnet draws iron filings. Almost without glancing at one another they stand shoulder to shoulder, drawing up closer and closer—and in a corner of

the square a thick black body with a myriad heads takes form. Mutely expectant, sullen and tense, it is almost motionless. The body has taken shape, and immediately after the spirit becomes manifest; a wide and dull face is formed, and hundreds of blank eyes acquire a common expression and a common stare—a watchful, suspicious stare which unconsciously searches for that which instinct fearfully apprises it of.

Thus is born that terrifying beast which bears the stolid name of Mob.

...When someone appears on the street who does not look like everybody else, either because he is dressed differently or because he walks faster than the rest, the Mob watches him, turning its hundreds of heads towards him and probing him with a gimlet eye.

Why does not he dress like everybody else? Suspicious. And what could be making him walk so fast along this street on a day when everyone walks slowly? Strange...

Two young men walk by laughing loudly. The Mob is alerted. What is there to laugh about in a life where everything is so unintelligible, when there is no work to do? Laughter rouses a faint irritation in the beast, inimical to gayety. Several heads turn sullenly and, grumbling, follow with their eyes the gay pair...

But the Mob itself breaks out laughing when it sees a newspaper boy trying to dodge streetcars that are closing in on him from three sides of the square, threatening to crush him. The panic of a man threatened by death is something the Mob understands, and anything it understands in the mysterious bustle of life gives it joy...

There, riding by in his car, is a man known throughout the city, throughout the country even—the Boss. The Mob looks at him with a deep interest, it fuses the stare of its numerous eyes in one ray, illumining the shrivelled, bony, sallow face of the Boss with the dull gleam of its respect. It is thus that old bears who have been tamed as cubs look at their master. The Mob understands the Boss—he is a power. He is a great man—thousands toil that he may live, thousands! The Mob sees a perfectly clear meaning in the,

Boss—the Boss provides work. But there in a streetcar sits a grey-headed man; he has a grim face and stern eyes. The Mob knows who he is, too; he is often described in the newspapers as a maniac who wants to destroy the state, to take away all the factories, railroads, ships—to take away everything... The papers call this a mad ridiculous project. The Mob stares at the old man with reproach, with cold condemnation, with scornful curiosity. A mad-man is always interesting.

The Mob only senses, only sees. It cannot convert its impressions into thoughts; its spirit is numb and its heart blind.

...People walk along, one after another, and this is strange, incomprehensible, inexplicable—where are they going, and why? There is a tremendous number of them, and they differ far more than the pieces of metal, wood and stone, than the coins, fabrics and all the tools with which yesterday the beast worked. This irritates the Mob. It vaguely feels that there is another life, different from the one it leads, with other ways and habits, a life full of a strange allure...

A suspicion of danger, slowly feeding on this feeling of irritation, scrapes at the blind heart of the beast with its fine needles. The eyes of the beast darken, its thick, formless body grows visibly tense, gripped by an unconscious excitement, it trembles all over...

People, streetcars, and automobiles flash by... In the store windows, shiny baubles tease the eye. Their use is obscure, but they attract attention and provoke a desire to possess them...

The Mob is perturbed...

It vaguely feels itself alone in this life, lonely and disclaimed by all these smartly dressed people. It notices how clean are their necks, how slender and white their hands, how smooth and glossy their calm, well-fed faces. It can just picture the food these people gorge themselves with every day. Wonderful tasting food it must be, to give the faces such a sleek look and make the bellies fill out to such globous magnificence...

The Mob feels envy stir within itself, insistently tickling its stomach. . . .

Lovely, graceful women ride by in light, costly carriages. They recline provocatively on their cushions, their legs stretched out to show their little feet; their faces are like stars, and their beautiful eyes bid the people smile.

"See how lovely we are!" the women mutely call out.

The Mob attentively scrutinises these women and compares them with its wives. Very bony or too fat, the wives are always greedy and frequently sick. More than anything else their teeth trouble them and their stomachs get upset. And they are always wrangling among themselves.

The Mob sensually strips the women in the carriages of their clothes, paws their breasts and legs. And picturing the nude, well-fed, firm, gleaming bodies of the women, the Mob cannot withhold its admiration and voices it in lusty words which smell of hot, oily sweat, words that are pithy and strong, like the slap of a heavy, dirty hand. . . .

The Mob wants a woman. Its eyes glitter, greedily clutching at the slim, firm bodies of the beauties that flash by.

Their children, too, are a lovely sight. Their laughter and cries ring in the air. Neatly dressed, healthy children, with straight, slender legs. Rosy-cheeked, high-spirited. . . .

The children of the Mob are sickly and sallow-faced, and their legs, for some reason or other, are bowed. That is very common—bow-legged children. Must be the mothers' fault; they probably do something they shouldn't when giving birth to them. . . .

These comparisons breed envy in the Mob's dark heart.

To its irritation is added hostility, which always flowers out luxuriantly on the fertile soil of envy. The huge black body clumsily moves its limbs, hundreds of eyes meet all they find strange and inexplicable with an intent and prickly stare.

The Mob feels that it has an enemy, a crafty and powerful enemy who is scattered everywhere and therefore elusive. He is somewhere close and yet he is nowhere. He took for himself all the savoury dishes, the beautiful women, the

rosy children, the carriages, the bright silk fabrics, and he gives all this away to those he chooses—but not to the Mob. The Mob he despises, disclaims, and sees not, just as it sees not him. . . .

The Mob searches, sniffs; it watches everything. But all is as usual. And though there is much in the life of the streets which is new and strange, it flows on, flits past the Mob, without touching the taut strings of its hostility and its obscure desire to grab someone and crush him.

In the middle of the square stands a policeman in a grey helmet. His clean-shaven face shines like copper. This man is unconquerably strong—he holds a short thick club loaded with lead.

The Mob looks at the club out of the corner of its eye. It knows clubs, it has seen hundreds of thousands of them, and they are all just wood or metal.

But concealed in this short, blunt club lies a fiendish force one cannot counter.

The Mob is blindly, dimly hostile to everything. It is agitated and ready for something terrible. Impulsively it measures with its eyes the short blunt club. . . .

In the dark litter of the unconscious, fear ever smoulders. . . .

Life roars ceaselessly, tireless in its movement. Where does it get this energy on a day when the Mob is not at work?

With a greater and greater clarity the Mob realises how lonely it is, senses some deception, and, its irritation mounting, vigilantly watches for something to lay its hands on.

It now becomes sensitive to and receptive of impressions—nothing new escapes its glance unperceived. Its jibes are keen-edged and full of malice, and the man in the grey hat with the overwide brim must needs quicken his steps under the pricks of its mocking stare and the lashing sting of its remarks. A woman, as she crosses the square, lifts her skirts a trifle, but when she sees the Mob ogling her legs, her fingers go suddenly limp, as if someone had struck her hand, and she lets the skirts fall. . . .

From somewhere a drunkard reels out into the square. His head dropped on his breast, he walks, muttering something; his sodden body sways flabbily, and any second he may crash to the pavement or the rails. . . .

One hand is thrust in his pocket. In the other he holds a crumpled, dusty hat; he waves it above his head, and he sees nothing.

Swept into the wild vortex of metallic sound, he comes round a little, stops, and looks about him with bleary eyes. Streetcars and carriages are speeding towards him from all sides—a long, moving thread on which dark beads are strung. A clanging of bells comes from the streetcars in angry warning, there is a clicking of horseshoes, everything booms, clatters, and thrusts itself upon him.

The Mob senses the possibility of something amusing. Again it fuses hundreds of its stares in one and watches expectantly. . . .

The streetcar motorman clangs the bell and leaning over yells at the drunkard, his face red from the strain. The drunkard amiably waves his hat at him and steps on the rails just in front of the streetcar. His whole body thrown back, his eyes closed, the motorman violently jerks the handle around. The car gives a jolt and stops. . . .

The drunkard ambles along—he has put his hat on and let his head sink to his chest again.

But from behind the first streetcar a second slowly slides out and knocks the drunkard's legs out from under him; he falls heavily onto the fender, then drops softly to the rails, and the fender pushes and carries along his crumpled body over the ground. . . .

The drunkard's arms and legs can be seen flapping against the ground. Blood curls out in a thin red line, like a beckoning smile. . . .

The women in the car scream shrilly, but all the sounds are eclipsed by the deep, triumphant howl of the Mob—it is as if a massive bedspread, damp and heavy, was suddenly flung over them. The troubled clang of bells, the hoof beats, the whine of electricity—all is smothered by fear of the Mob, of the black wave that surges forward,

roaring, like a beast, striking against the cars, dashing its dark spray all over them, and beginning its work.

Shivering in startled little gasps, the window glass in the streetcar is shattered into bits. Nothing can be seen but the enormous body of the Mob, thrashing and quivering, and nothing can be heard except its howl, its exultant cry, with which it joyfully proclaims itself a power and announces that it, also, has at last found something to do.

Hundreds of big hands cut through the air; scores of eyes glitter with the greedy sparkle of a strange, sharp hunger.

It pommels someone, the black Mob; it tears at him, it wreaks its vengeance. . . .

From the storm of its merged cries, more and more insistently, comes a hissed word that glitters like a long-bladed, flexible knife:

"Lynch!"

The word has the magic power of uniting all the Mob's vague desires, of fusing its cries in one dense roar:

"Lynch!"

Some of the Mob's segments swing themselves up onto the roofs of the streetcars, and from there, too, coiling through the air and swishing like a whip, comes the word:

"Lynch!"

In the centre of the Mob a compact ball has formed; it has engulfed something, sucked it in, and is in motion, drifting out into the open. The Mob's thick body compliantly yields to the pressure from the centre, and, splitting, it casts from out of its bowels this bulky black mass—its head, its jaws.

In its teeth swings a tattered, bloody figure—he was the streetcar motorman, as one can see from the stripes on the remnants of his uniform.

Now he is just a piece of chewed meat—fresh meat, appetisingly dripping with bright-red blood.

The black jaws of the Mob carry him along, still crunching, and its arms, like the tentacles of an octopus, twist about this body without a face.

The Mob bellows:

"Lynch!"

And it lines up behind its head, shaping into a long, thick body that is ready to devour a great quantity of fresh meat.

But suddenly a clean-shaven man with a copper face appears before it. He has pulled his grey helmet down over his eyes, and he towers like a grey rock in the Mob's way, his club raised mutely in the air.

The head of the Mob swerves to the right, then to the left, to escape the club, to pass it by.

The policeman stands stock-still; the club in his hand does not waver, and his hard eyes are calm and unwinking.

The policeman's confidence in his strength throws a chill into the burning face of the Mob.

If a man alone can stand up to it, with no regard for its heavy, powerful, lava-like will, if he can be so calm—then he must be unconquerable!...

The Mob screams something into his face, it waves its tentacles as if it would twine them around the policeman's wide shoulders, but in its very cry, angry though it is, there is a plaintive note. And when the copper face of the policeman darkens grimly, when he raises higher the hand with the short, blunt club—the Mob's roaring voice breaks strangely, and its trunk slowly and gradually pulls apart; but the head still grumbles, still swerves this way and that; it wants to crawl on.

Unhurriedly two more men with clubs move near. The Mob's tentacles grow suddenly weak and let go of the body in their grip; the body falls on its knees, prostrating itself at the feet of the representative of the law, and he raises above it the short and blunt symbol of his authority....

The head of the Mob, too, slowly breaks up into pieces. It no longer has any trunk; tired and cowed, the men creep across the square, their dark figures scattering over its filthy surface like the black beads of an enormous necklace.

Into the gutter-like streets the people drift, grim and silent. Broken people, disbanded people....

My Interviews

One of the Kings of the Republic

...The steel and oil kings, and all other kings of the United States have always troubled my imagination. I could not imagine that people with so much money could be like ordinary mortals.

It seemed to me that every of them must have at least three stomachs and about a hundred and fifty teeth. I was convinced that a millionaire ate all day long without pause from six o'clock in the morning until midnight; that he consumed the most expensive foods: geese, turkeys, suckling pigs, radishes with butter, puddings, cakes and all sorts of other delicacies. By evening his jaws grew so stiff that he ordered his Negroes to chew the food for him and he merely swallowed it. Finally, when he was utterly exhausted, gasping and dripping with sweat, they carried him off to bed. And the next morning he woke up at six o'clock to resume the arduous routine.

But even with this strenuous effort, he did not consume even fifty per cent of the interest on his capital.

This was a hard life, to be sure. But what was to be done? What was the use of being a millionaire if you could not eat more than an ordinary person did?

It seemed to me that his underclothing must be made of brocade, that the heels of his boots were attached with gold nails, and that instead of a hat he wore some diamond headgear. His jacket must be made of the most expensive velvet, it was at least fifty feet long and trimmed with no less than 300 gold buttons. On holidays he put on eight jackets and six pairs of pants one on top of the other. True, this would be both awkward and uncomfortable. . . . But so wealthy a man could not dress like everyone else. . . .

The millionaire's pocket I imagined to be like a hole into which he could easily put away a church, the Senate building and sundry necessities. . . . But while believing that this gentleman's stomach must have a capacity equal to that of the hold of a good seagoing vessel, I could never picture to myself the length of the legs and trousers of such a being. I believed, however, that the quilt under which he slept must be no less than a mile square. And if he chewed tobacco, it was naturally of the highest quality and one or two pounds at a time. If he took snuff, he must use at least a pound in one pinch. Money wants spending it. . . .

His fingers were remarkably sensitive and possessed the miraculous power of growing longer at will: for example, if from New York he espied a dollar sprouting somewhere in Siberia, he stretched his hand across the Bering Strait and plucked his favourite flower without stirring from his seat.

Oddly enough, with all this I could not imagine what the head of the monster was like. Moreover, I felt that a head was entirely superfluous with such a mass of muscle and bone moved by the sole desire to squeeze gold out of everything. On the whole, my conception of the millionaire was somewhat vague. In a word, what I saw primarily was a pair of long flexible arms. They had seized the globe in their embrace and drawn it close to the dark, cavernous mouth which sucked, gnawed and chewed at our planet, dripping greedy saliva over it as if it were a hot baked potato. . . .

You may well imagine my surprise when on meeting a millionaire I found him to be a most ordinary person.

Seated before me in a deep armchair was a long, wizened old man whose brown, wrinkled hands of normal size were folded calmly on his stomach. His flabby cheeks were carefully shaven, and the drooping lower lip exposed well-made dentures, with some gold caps. His upper lip—shaven, bloodless and thin—was glued to his chewing apparatus and barely moved when the old man spoke. There were no eyebrows over his colourless eyes, and his tanned skull was completely hairless. One felt that the face could do with a trifle more skin; reddish, immobile and smooth, it resembled the face of a newborn babe. It was difficult to determine whether this being had just come into the world or was about to depart from it. . . .

His dress too was that of an ordinary mortal. All the gold there was on him was in his ring, watch and teeth. Altogether it probably weighed less than half a pound. In general, the man had the appearance of an old servant in one of Europe's aristocratic homes. . . .

The room in which he received me was remarkable neither for luxury nor beauty. The furniture was massive, that's about all.

The idea suggested by this furniture was that elephants perhaps sometimes visited this home.

"Are you . . . the millionaire?" I asked, unable to believe my own eyes.

"Oh, yes!" he replied, nodding.

I pretended to take him at his word, but decided to call his bluff there and then.

"How much beef can you consume at breakfast?" I asked.

"I eat no beef!" he declared. "A slice of orange, an egg, a small cup of tea, and that's all. . . ."

His innocent baby eyes gleamed dully like two large drops of murky water, and I could not detect the slightest hint of falsehood in them.

"Very well!" said I, perplexed. "But, pray be frank, tell me candidly, how many times a day do you eat?"

"Twice a day!" he said calmly. "Breakfast and dinner—that is quite enough for me. For dinner I have a little soup,

some chicken and a sweet. Fruit. A cup of coffee. A cigar. . . ."

My astonishment was growing as rapidly as a pumpkin. He looked at me with the eyes of a saint. I paused for breath, and then went on:

"But if this is true, what do you do with all your money?"

He squared his shoulders slightly, and his eyes rolled in their sockets, as he replied:

"I use it to make more money. . . ."

"What for?"

"In order to make still more money. . . ."

"What for?" I persisted.

He leaned forward, resting his elbows on the arms of the chair, and with a slight shade of curiosity asked:

"Are you mad?"

"Are you?" I retorted.

The old man bent his head and through the gold of his teeth, drawled:

"An amusing fellow. . . . I don't think I've ever met anyone like this before. . . ."

Then he raised his head and stretching his mouth almost as far as his ears, he proceeded to scrutinise me in silence. Judging by his calm demeanor, he evidently considered himself quite normal. I noticed a pin with a small diamond in his tie. Had this stone been the size of a shoe heel I might have known where I was.

"And what do you do with yourself?" I asked.

"I make money," he said shortly squaring his shoulders.

"A counterfeiter?" I exclaimed with joy, feeling that I was on the verge of solving the mystery. But at this point he began to hiccup. His whole body shook as if he were being tickled by some invisible hand. His eyes blinked rapidly.

"This is funny!" he said, calming down and presenting me with a moist, satisfied look. "Now ask me something else, please!" he invited and for some reason puffed his cheeks.

I reflected for a moment and then asked firmly:

"And how do you make money?"

"Ah! That's more like it!" he said with a nod. "It is quite simple. I own railways. The farmers produce goods. I deliver their produce to the markets. You simply have to figure how much money to leave the farmer so that he won't starve to death and be able to keep on working, and you pocket the rest as freight charge. Quite simple."

"And are the farmers satisfied?"

"Not all of them, I presume!" he said with childlike simplicity. "But people are never satisfied, they say. You will always find cranks who grumble. . . ."

"Does not the government interfere with you?" I ventured with diffidence.

"The government?" he echoed and rubbed his forehead thoughtfully with his fingers. Then as if recalling something, he went on with a nod: "Ah. . . . You mean those fellows . . . in Washington? No, they don't bother me. They're good guys. . . . Some of them belong to my club. But you don't see much of them. . . . That's why you're liable to forget about them sometimes. No, they don't interfere," he repeated, and directing a curious glance at me, queried:

"Do you mean to say there are governments that prevent people from making money?"

I felt embarrassed at my own naïveté and his wisdom.

"No," I said quietly. "I did not mean that. . . . You see, I thought the government ought sometimes to forbid downright robbery. . . ."

"Now, now!" he objected. "That is idealism. It is not done here. The government has no right to interfere in private affairs. . . ."

I felt increasingly humble before this calm childlike wisdom.

"But is it a private matter when one man ruins many?" I queried politely.

"Ruin?" he echoed, opening his eyes wide. "Ruin means when labour costs are high. Or when there is a strike. But we have immigrants. They always bring down wages and willingly take the place of the strikers. When there are enough immigrants in the country who will work for low

wages and buy a lot of goods, then everything will be fine."

He grew slightly animated and looked less like a cross between an old man and an infant. His thin brown fingers stirred and this dry voice crackled in my ears as he went on:

"The government? That is indeed an interesting question. A good government is important. It sees to it that there should be as many people in the country as I need, to buy all that I want to sell; that there should be just enough workers to avoid any shortage of them for my purposes. But no more! Then there will be no socialists. And no strikes. The government must not levy high taxes. I myself will take all that the people have to give. That is what I call a good government."

"He betrays stupidity—an unquestionable sign that he is aware of his own greatness," I reflected. "He really must be a king. . . ."

"What I need," he went on in a firm, confident tone, "is order in the country. The government hires all sorts of philosophers who spend at least eight hours every Sunday teaching the people to respect the laws. If the philosophers cannot manage, then call in the troops. It is not the method, but the result that counts. The consumer and the worker must be made to respect the law. That is all!" he concluded, twiddling his fingers.

"No, he is not stupid, he can hardly be a king!" I reflected, and then asked: "Are you satisfied with the present government?"

He did not reply at once.

"It does less than it could. I say: immigrants should for the time being be admitted to the country. But we have political liberties which they enjoy, and this must be paid for. Let each one of them bring in at least 500 dollars. A man who has 500 dollars is ten times better than one who has only 50. . . . Bad people—tramps, paupers, the sick and other idlers are of no use anywhere."

"But," I ventured, "this will reduce the influx of immigrants."

The old man nodded in agreement.

"In time I shall propose that the doors of our country be closed to them completely. . . . But in the meantime, let each one bring in a little gold. . . . It is good for the country. Furthermore, it is necessary to lengthen the probation period for naturalisation. In time this will have to be abolished altogether. Let those who wish to work for the Americans do so, but it is not at all necessary to grant them the rights of American citizens. We have made a sufficient number of Americans as it is. Each one of them is quite capable of adding to the country's population. All this is the government's concern. But it should be organised on a different basis. The members of the government must all be shareholders in industrial enterprises, then they will more easily and quickly understand the interests of the country. At present I have to buy senators to convince them that I must have . . . some trifle or another. That would no longer be necessary. . . ."

He sighed, jerked his leg and added:

"Only from the summit of a mountain of gold does one get a correct view of life."

"And what do you think about religion?" I asked now that he had made his political views quite clear.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, slapping his knee and moving his eyebrows energetically. "I think very well of it! Religion is essential for the people. I sincerely believe this. As a matter of fact I myself preach in church on Sundays . . . indeed, I do!"

"And what do you say?" I queried.

"Everything that a devout Christian can say in church!" he replied with conviction. "I preach in a humble parish, of course, the poor always need a kind word and paternal instruction. . . . I say to them. . . ."

For a moment his face assumed an infantile expression, then he pressed his lips tightly together and his glance travelled towards the ceiling where cupids were shamefacedly hiding the nude body of a fleshy woman with the pink skin of a Yorkshire sow. The colours of the ceiling were reflected in the depths of his lustreless eyes, making them sparkle. And he began quietly:

"Brothers and sisters in Christ! Do not let yourselves be tempted by the cunning demon of envy, shun all things worldly. Life on this earth is short: a man is a good worker only until the age of forty, after forty he can no longer be employed in the factories. Life is not secure. One false movement of your hand at work and the machine will crush your bones; a sunstroke and it is all over with you! Disease and misfortune dog you at every step! The poor man is like a blind man on the roof of a tall house—which-ever way he turns he will fall and meet his doom, as apostle James, the brother of Jude, tells us. Brethren! You must not treasure earthly life—it is the work of the devil, the despoiler of human souls. Your kingdom, beloved children of Christ, like the kingdom of your father, is not of this world; it is in heaven. And if you are patient, if you go through this earthly life meekly and patiently, without murmur and complaint, He will receive you into paradise and reward you with eternal bliss for your labours on this earth. This life is only a purgatory for your souls, and the more you suffer here the greater the bliss awaiting you there, as apostle Jude himself tells us."

He pointed towards the ceiling, and after reflecting for a moment, continued in a cold, hard voice:

"Yes, dear brothers and sisters! This life is empty and trivial, if we do not sacrifice it for the love of our neighbour whoever he may be. Surrender not your hearts to the power of the demons of envy! What is there to envy? Earthly blessings are mere illusions, they are the playthings of the devil. We shall all die, rich and poor, kings and coal miners, bankers and street cleaners. It may be that in the cool gardens of paradise miners will become kings, and a king will work with a broom to sweep the garden paths of fallen leaves and the paper wrappers from the candies that you will eat every day. Brothers! What is there to wish for on this earth, in this dark forest of sin where the soul blunders like a babe? Follow the ways of love and meekness to paradise, endure in patient silence everything that falls to your lot. Love your fellow men, even those that humiliate you...."

He closed his eyes again, and rocking in his chair, went on:

"Turn a deaf ear to those who excite in your hearts the sinful feeling of envy by contrasting the poverty of some with the wealth of others. These people are the envoys of the devil, the Lord forbids you to envy your neighbour. The rich too are poor, they are poor in love they inspire, Love the rich man for he is the Lord's chosen, exclaimed Jude, brother of Jesus, pontiff of the church. Do not harken to the gospel of equality and other inventions of the devil. What is equality here, on this earth? You must only aspire to equal one another in purity of soul before your God. Bear your cross patiently, and obedience will lighten your burden. God is with you, my children, and you need nothing else!"

The old man fell silent, his mouth stretched wide, his gold teeth flashing, and looked triumphantly at me.

"You make good use of religion," I remarked.

"Yes, indeed! I know its worth," he said. "Religion, I repeat, is necessary for the poor. I like it. It says that everything on the earth belongs to the devil. Man, if you want to save your soul, do not wish for nor touch anything here on earth. You shall have all the joys of life after death—everything in heaven is for you! When people believe in this, it is far easier to handle them. Yes. Religion is a lubricant. And the more we use it to oil the machine of life, the less friction will there be among the parts, and the easier the job of the operator of the machine...."

"He really is a king," I decided.

"And do you consider yourself a Christian?" I respectfully asked this recent descendant of a swineherd.

"I certainly do!" he exclaimed with full conviction. "But," and, pointing upwards, he said impressively, "at the same time I am an American and, as such, a strict moralist...."

His face assumed a dramatic expression: he pursed his lips and his ears moved closer to his nose.

"What exactly do you mean?" I inquired lowering my voice.

"Between you and me," he said in a whisper. "It is impossible for an American to recognise Christ!"

"Impossible?" I whispered after a slight pause.

"Decidedly," he confirmed in a whisper.

"But why?" I queried after a moment's silence.

"He was born out of wedlock!" The old man winked at me and his glance travelled around the room. "Do you understand? A man born out of wedlock cannot even be an official in America to say nothing of a god. He is not received anywhere in decent society. Not a single girl will agree to marry him. Oh, we are very strict! And if we were to recognise Christ, we would also have to accept all the illegitimately born as respectable people . . . even if they were born of a Negro and a white woman. Think how horrible that would be! Eh?"

It must indeed have seemed very horrible, for the eyes of the old man turned green and grew round as an owl's. Pulling up his lower lip with an effort, he pressed it against his teeth. He evidently believed that this grimace made his face more impressive and stern.

"And you flatly refuse to recognise the Negro as a human being?" I queried, feeling oppressed by the morality of a democratic country.

"How naïve you are!" he exclaimed with pity. "Why, they are black! And they smell. We lynch a Negro as soon as we find out that he has taken a white woman as his wife. We put a rope round his neck and hang him on the nearest tree without much ado! We are very strict, when it comes to morals. . . ."

He now inspired me with the respect that one cannot help feeling for a decomposing corpse. But I had undertaken a job and was determined to pursue it to the very end. I went on asking questions, eager to speed up this process of torturing truth, liberty, reason and all that is noble and splendid, all I believe in.

"What is your attitude towards the socialists?"

"They are the real servants of the devil!" he retorted quickly, slapping his knee. "Socialists are the sand in the machine of life, sand that penetrates into everything, pre-

venting the mechanism from working smoothly. With a good government there should be no socialists. Yet they are born in America. This means that the people in Washington don't quite know their business. They must deprive the socialists of citizenship rights. That would be something at least. I say a government must be in closer touch with reality. And it would be if all its members were millionaires. That's the point!"

"You are a very consistent man!" I said.

"Ah, yes!" he agreed with a nod of approval. The child-like expression had vanished from his face and deep wrinkles appeared on his cheeks.

I wanted to ask him a few questions about art.

"What is your attitude. . ." I began, but he raised his finger and began to speak:

"Atheism in the head and anarchism in the stomach, that's what a socialist is. His soul has been equipped by the devil with wings of madness and fury. . . . In order to fight the socialist we need more religion and more soldiers. Religion against atheism, soldiers against anarchy. First fill the head of the socialist with the lead of church sermons. And if this does not cure him, then let the soldiers pump lead into his stomach!"

He nodded with conviction and said firmly:

"Great is the power of the devil!"

"It is indeed!" I readily agreed.

This was the first time I had had an opportunity to observe the powerful influence of that Yellow Devil—Gold—in such a striking form. The dry, rheumatic, gout-ridden bones of the old man, his feeble, emaciated body encased in its sack of old skin, the whole little pile of decrepit rubbish, was now animated by the cold and cruel will of the Father of lies and spiritual corruption. The eyes of the old man gleamed like two new coins, and he seemed to have become stronger and drier. His resemblance to a servant was even more striking than before, but now I knew who his master was.

"What do you think of art?" I asked.

He glanced at me, and passing his hand over his face

wiped away the expression of harsh malice. Once again there was something childlike in this face.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"What do you think of art?"

"Ah!" he responded calmly. "I don't think of it, I simply buy it. . . ."

"I am aware of that. But perhaps you have your own views on art and what you expect of it?"

"Oh! Of course, I know what I want from art. . . . Art must be amusing—that is what I want. It must make me laugh. There is not much to laugh about in my business. The brain sometimes requires a sedative . . . and sometimes the body needs a stimulant. Artistic decorations for the ceiling or walls should stimulate the appetite. . . . Advertisements should be painted in the best and most attractive colours. The advertisement must lure you from afar, from a mile away, and lead you at once where it wishes. Then it pays. Statues or vases are always best made of bronze rather than of marble or porcelain: servants are liable to break porcelain. Cock fights and rat hunts are fine. I have seen them in London . . . very fine indeed! Boxing is also good, but it should not be allowed to end in killing. . . . Music should be patriotic. A march is always good, but American marches are the best. America is the best country in the world; that is why American music is the best on earth. Good music is always to be found among good people. The Americans are the best people on earth. They have the most money. No one has as much money as we have. That is why the whole world will soon be coming to us. . . ."

As I listened to the smug chatter of this sick child, I thought with gratitude of the savages of Tasmania. It is said that they too are cannibals, but their aesthetic sense is nevertheless developed.

"Do you go to the theatre?" I asked the old slave of the Yellow Devil, in order to interrupt his bragging about the country which he had polluted with his life.

"The theatre? Oh, yes! I know, that's art too!" he said with a confident air.

"And what do you like in the theatre?"

"It's nice when there are many young ladies wearing lownecked gowns and you can look at them from above!" he replied, after a moment's thought.

"But what do you like most of all in the theatre?" I asked, growing desperate.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, stretching his lips nearly all the way to his ears. "The actresses, of course, like everybody else. . . . If the actresses are young and beautiful, they are always good. But it is hard to tell at once which of them is really young. They put up such a good front. I understand, that is their profession. But sometimes you think—ah! there's a fine girl! Then you learn that she is fifty years old and has had at least two hundred lovers. That is unpleasant, of course. The circus girls are better than the actresses. They are almost always younger and more supple. . . ."

He was apparently an authority on the subject. Even I, a hardened sinner, who has wallowed in vice all my life, had something to learn from him.

"And how do you like poetry?" I asked.

"Poetry?" he echoed, looking down at his shoes and frowning. He thought for a moment, raised his head and showing all his teeth at once, went on: "Poems? Ah, yes! I like poems. Life will be very jolly, if everybody begins to write ads in verse."

"Who is your favourite poet?" I hurried on to the next question.

The old man looked at me in confusion, and asked slowly:

"What did you say?"

I repeated my question.

"Hm . . . you are a very amusing person!" he said, shaking his head dubiously. "Why should I like any poet? And why should any particular poet be liked?"

"I beg your pardon!" I said, mopping my perspiring forehead. "I meant to ask what is your favourite book, that is, apart from your checkbook. . . ."

"Ah! That is quite a different matter!" he agreed. "The

two books I like best are the Bible and the Ledger. They are equally stimulating for the mind. As soon as you take them up you feel that they possess a strength that gives you everything you need."

"He's making fun of me!" I thought and looked squarely into his face. No. The eyes dispelled every doubt as to the sincerity of this infant. There he was seated in the chair, looking like a shrivelled nut in its shell, and it was quite obvious that he fully believed in the truth of his words.

"Yes!" he went on, scrutinising his nails. "They are excellent books! One was written by the prophets, and I myself created the other book. You will find very few words in my book. It contains figures. They show what a man can do if he is willing to work honestly and industriously. The government would do well to publish my book after my death. Let people know what they must do to rise to my exalted station."

And he made a sweeping gesture with the triumphant air of a victor.

I felt that it was time to end the interview. Not every head can stand being trampled upon.

"Perhaps you would like to say something about science?" I asked quietly.

"Science?" He lifted a finger and raised his eyes ceilingwards. Then he produced his watch, looked at the time, snapped the lid and winding the chain around his finger, swung the watch in the air. After all this he sighed and proceeded to speak:

"Science . . . yes, I know! Books! If they speak well of America they are useful books. But you will rarely find the truth in books. These . . . poets, who make the books, earn very little, I believe. In a country where everyone is occupied with his business no one has time to read books. . . . Yes, the poets are furious because their books are not bought. The government ought to pay the writers well. A well-fed man is always kind and cheerful. If books about America are necessary at all, then good poets should be hired, and then all the books America needs will be made. . . . That is all."

"Your definition of science is rather narrow," I observed.

He closed his eyes and was lost in thought. Then he opened them again and continued confidently:

"Well, yes, teachers, philosophers . . . that is also science. Professors, midwives, dentists, I know. Lawyers, doctors, engineers. All right. They are necessary. Good sciences . . . ought not to teach anything bad. . . . But my daughter's teacher once told me that there are social sciences. . . . That is what I do not understand. I believe that this is harmful. Good science cannot be created by a socialist. Socialists must not have anything to do with science at all. Edison, he is creating science that is useful or amusing. The phonograph, the cinema—that is useful. But many books of science—that is too much. People should not read books which might put all sorts of doubts into their heads. Everything on this earth is as it should be and there is no need whatever to get mixed up with books."

I rose.

"Oh! You are going?" he asked.

"Yes!" I said. "But perhaps, now that I am leaving, you will tell me what, after all, is the sense in being a millionaire?"

He began to hiccup and jerk his legs instead of answering. Perhaps this was his manner of laughing?

"It is a habit!" he cried, when he had caught his breath.

"What is a habit?" I queried.

"To be a millionaire . . . it's a habit!"

After reflecting for a while I asked my last question:

"Then you think that tramps, drug addicts and millionaires are beings of the same order?"

This remark must have offended him. His eyes grew round and his spleen turned them green.

"I think you are ill-bred," he snapped.

"Good-bye!" said I.

He saw me politely to the porch and remained standing on the top of the steps, staring down at his shoes. In front of his house was a lawn covered with thick, evenly-cut grass. I was walking over the lawn exulting in the thought that I

should never see this man again when I heard a voice behind me.

"I say!"

I turned back. He was still standing on the porch and staring at me.

"Have you more kings than you need over there in Europe?" he asked slowly.

"If you ask me, we don't need any of them!" I replied.

He turned aside and spat.

"I was thinking of hiring a couple of good kings for myself," he said. "What do you say to that?"

"But what for?"

"It would be amusing, you know. I would order them to box right here. . . ."

He pointed to the lawn in front of his house and added in the tone of a query:

"From one to half past one every day, eh? It would be pleasant to indulge in art for a half hour after lunch . . . very good."

He was in earnest, and I could feel that he would do everything to satisfy this wish.

"But why must you have kings for the purpose?" I asked.

"Because nobody here has thought of that yet!" was his explanation.

"Yes, but kings are accustomed to have others do their fighting for them!" I said and started off.

"I say!" he called me again.

I paused once more. He was still standing in the same place, his hands in his pockets. There was a sort of a dreamy expression in his face.

He moved his lips as if he were chewing, and said slowly:

"How much will it cost, do you think, two kings to box half an hour every day for three months, eh?"

1906

A Priest of Morality

. . . He came to me late at night and, glancing suspiciously around the room, asked in a low voice:

"Could I talk to you alone for half an hour?"

In his tone, and in the whole of his thin, rather stooping figure, there was something mysterious and secretive. He sat down gingerly on a chair, as if afraid the furniture wouldn't bear the weight of his long, sharp bones.

"Would you pull down the blind?" he asked softly.

"Certainly," said I, and hastened to comply.

Nodding gratefully, he winked towards the window and remarked more softly still:

"They're forever on the watch."

"Who?"

"Why, the reporters."

I took a good look at him. Dressed very decently, rather smartly, in fact, he nevertheless gave the impression of a poor man. His bald, angular skull gleamed modestly and unassumingly. A clean-shaven, very thin face; grey eyes, smiling diffidently and half-shaded by light lashes. When he raised the lashes and looked up into my face, I had a feeling of being confronted with a hazy, not very deep emptiness. He sat with his feet drawn under the chair, his right hand on his knee, and the left, with the derby hat in it, dangling to the floor. His long fingers trembled slightly, and there was a heavy droop to the corners of his tightly-compressed lips—a sign that this man had paid dear for his clothes.

"Let me introduce myself," he began, with a sigh and a sidelong glance at the window. "I'm a professional sinner, so to speak. . . ."

"I beg your pardon?" I asked, trying to hide my dismay.

"I'm a professional sinner," he repeated word for word, and added: "My speciality is offences against public morality. . . ."

There was nothing but humility in the tone in which the sentence was spoken; nor did I catch a shade of penitence in his words or face.

"You wouldn't like a drink of water, would you?" I suggested.

"No, thank you," he declined, and his eyes with their apologetic smile came to rest upon me. "You don't quite understand me, do you?"

"Why, I do, of course!" I countered, resorting to jauntiness as cover for my ignorance, in the accepted manner of European journalists. But he didn't seem to believe me. Swinging his derby there and back and smiling modestly, he said:

"Let me tell you something about my job, so that you will know what I am..."

Here he sighed and dropped his head. And again I was surprised to hear only weariness in the sigh.

"You remember," he began, swinging the hat gently, "there was a story in the papers about a man ... that is, about a drunk? The row at the theatre?"

"The gentleman in the front row, who got up during the most heart-rending scene, put on his hat and started shouting for a cab?" I asked.

"Yes," he confirmed, and added obligingly: "That was me. The item headlined 'Child-Beating Brute' was about me too, and so was another—'Husband Sells Wife'.... The man who accosted a lady in the street with indecent suggestions—that was me too.... In general, they write about me at least once a week, and always when it's a case of proving how depraved public morals are...."

He said all this quietly, very distinctly, but without any air of boasting. I couldn't make him out, but didn't want to give myself away. Like all writers, I always make a show of knowing life and men like the palm of my hand.

"Hm!" said I, trying to sound like a philosopher. "And do you enjoy spending your time that way?"

"Well, in my younger days, it used to amuse me, I own," he replied. "But now I'm forty-five, married, two daughters.... And so it's very uncomfortable to be held up in the papers two or three times a week as a fount of moral turpitude. And reporters watching all the time to see that you do your work punctually and scrupulously...."

I coughed to conceal my bewilderment. Then asked commiseratingly:

"It's a disease with you, is it?"

He shook his head in denial, fanned himself with his hat, and answered:

"No, it's my profession. I told you, my speciality is making minor disturbances in the streets and public places.... Other people at our Bureau handle bigger and more responsible jobs—such as outraging religious feelings, seducing girls, stealing, but no more than a thousand dollars...." He sighed, looked around and added: "And other offences against morality.... And I only make minor disturbances...."

He was talking the way a craftsman talks of his craft. It was beginning to annoy me, and I inquired sarcastically:

"And it doesn't satisfy you?"

"No," he answered simply.

His simplicity was disarming, and excited my keen curiosity. After a pause, I asked:

"Have you been in prison?"

"Three times. Ordinarily, thought, I keep within the limits of a fine. It's the Bureau that pays the fines, of course," he explained.

"The Bureau?" I echoed mechanically.

"Oh, yes. You'll agree I couldn't pay the fines myself," he said with a smile. "Fifty dollars a week is very little for a family of four...."

"Let me think," I said, getting up.

"Certainly," he agreed.

I began walking past him up and down the room, searching my memory for all the different kinds of mental disorders. I was anxious to diagnose his ailment, but I couldn't. One thing was clear—it wasn't megalomania. He watched me with a polite smile on his thin, emaciated face, and waited patiently.

"And so there's a Bureau?" I asked, coming to a halt in front of him.

"Yes," he said.

"And it employs a lot of people?"

"In this town, a hundred and twenty-five men and seventy-five women. . . ."

"In this town? Then . . . in other towns there are Bureaus too?"

"Why, of course, all over the country," he said, smiling patronisingly.

I began to feel sorry for myself.

"But . . . how do they . . ." I asked hesitantly, "what do they do, these Bureaus?"

"Offend against the laws of morality," he answered modestly, got up from his chair, shifted to the armchair, stretched out and peered into my face with frank curiosity. He evidently thought me a savage, and wasn't troubling any more to be on his best behaviour.

"Damn it!" I thought. "Mustn't let on that I haven't the foggiest what it's all about. . . ." And, rubbing my hands, I said brightly:

"Why, that's interesting! Most interesting! . . . Only . . . what are they for?"

"What?" he smiled.

"These Bureaus for offending against the laws of morality?"

He laughed, the adult's good-natured laugh at a child's foolishness. I looked at him and found myself thinking that ignorance was in truth the source of all the disagreeable things in life.

"What do you think? A man wants to live, doesn't he?" he demanded.

"Well, of course."

"And have a good time?"

"Yes indeed!"

He got up, walked over to me and slapped my shoulder.

"And how can you have a good time without breaking the laws of morality, hey?"

He fell back, gave me a wink, sprawled in the armchair again like a boiled fish on a platter, brought out a cigar and lit up without asking my permission. Then he went on:

"Who wants to eat strawberries with carbolic acid?"

And he dropped the burning match on the floor.

It's always like that—as soon as a man realises that he has an advantage over another, he begins to act towards him like a pig.

"I have some difficulty in understanding you," I confessed, looking into his face.

He grinned and said:

"I had a higher opinion of your abilities. . . ."

Minding his manners less and less, he flicked the cigar ash onto the floor, half-closed his eyes, and, watching the wreaths of cigar smoke through his lashes, informed me, with the air of an authority on the subject:

"You don't know much about morality, that's what. . . ."

"I've come up against it occasionally," I protested humbly.

He took the cigar out of his mouth, stared at the end of it and observed philosophically:

"Knocking your head against a wall doesn't mean that you've studied the wall."

"Yes, I agree with you there. But somehow I always seem to rebound from morality, the way an india-rubber ball does from a wall. . . ."

"It's a fault of upbringing," he pronounced sententiously.

"Quite possibly," I agreed. "The most desperate moralist I ever knew was my grandfather. He knew all the paths that led to heaven and was always pushing everybody who came his way on to these paths. The truth had been revealed to him alone, and he was most sedulous in drumming it, with anything that came to hand, into the heads of his children. He knew exactly what God wants of man, and taught even cats and dogs how to behave in order to attain perpetual bliss. For all that, he was greedy, spiteful, he was a liar and a usurer, and with the coward's cruelty—an attribute of all and every moralist—would beat his household at leisure with anything he liked and how he chose. . . . I tried to influence the old man, hoping to make him more tractable: one time I threw him out of the window; another day, I hit him with a mirror. The window and the mirror got smashed, but it didn't work any improvement in the old man. He lived and died a moralist."

And I've had a sort of aversion to morality ever since. . . . Perhaps you'll tell me something to reconcile me with it?" I suggested.

He pulled out his watch, took a look at it and said:

"I've no time to give you lectures. . . . Still, now that I've come, I might as well. Once you start a thing, you've got to finish it. Maybe you'll be able to do something for me. . . . I'll be brief. . . ."

He half-closed his eyes again and launched forth impressively:

"You've got to have morality—must remember that! Why have you got to have it? Because it protects your home, your rights and your property—in other words, it protects the interests of thy 'neighbour'. 'Thy neighbour'—that's always you, nobody else, see? If you've got a pretty wife, you tell everybody: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife.' If a man's got money, oxen, slaves, asses, and isn't an idiot himself—he will be a moralist. Morality serves your ends if you've got everything you need and want to keep it just for yourself; it's no use to you if you've got nothing except for the hair on your head."

He stroked his bald crown and continued:

"Morality is the guardian of your interests, you try to implant it in the people around you. In the streets you post policemen and detectives, and you stuff a man full of principles that are to become rooted in his brain and squash, strangle, destroy in him all ideas that operate against you, all desires that could endanger your rights. Morality is always strictest where economic antagonisms are most apparent. The more money I have, the stricter a moralist I am. That's why in America, where there are so many rich men, they profess a 100 hp morality. Get me?"

"Yes," I said, "but where does the Bureau come in?"

"Wait!" he retorted, raising his hand solemnly. "And so the purpose of morality is to impress on everyone that they mustn't interfere with you. Now if you've got a lot of money, you have a lot of desires and full opportunity to satisfy them—right? But most of your desires can't be satisfied without infringing on the principles of morality. . . . So

what are you to do? You can't preach to others what you yourself repudiate: it's awkward, and then people mightn't believe you. After all, not all of them are fools. . . . For instance, you sit in a restaurant drinking champagne and kissing a very pretty lady, who isn't your wife. . . . According to the standards that you set for the general public, that is immoral. But for yourself, this kind of pastime is essential: it's a delightful habit of yours, you get so much pleasure out of it. And so you're faced with the problem of how to reconcile the abstinence from delicious vices which you preach with your own liking for them? Another example: you tell everybody, 'Thou shalt not steal'. Because you wouldn't like it at all, would you, if people started stealing your property? But at the same time, though you have money, you feel an uncontrollable urge to steal a little more. Then again, you hold very strictly to the principle 'Thou shalt not kill'. Because you value life, because it is a pleasant, enjoyable affair. One day the workers in your coal mines demand higher pay. You have troops called in—you can't help it—and, bang!—a few dozen workers are killed. Or, say, you have no market for your goods. You point out the fact to your government and persuade it to open a new market for you. The government obligingly sends a little army to some place in Asia or Africa and carries out your wish, after shooting down a few hundred or thousand natives. . . . All this doesn't chime very well with your preaching of brotherly love, abstinence and chastity. But in shooting down workers or natives, you can justify yourself by pleading the interests of the state, which cannot exist if people don't knuckle down to your interests. The state, that's you—if you're a man of substance, of course. It's much harder for you in the little things—loose living, stealing, and so on. In general, the rich man's position is a tragic one. It's absolutely vital for him that everybody should love him, abstain from forming designs upon his property or interfering with his habits, and should respect the chastity of his wife, his sister, his daughters. For himself, on the other hand, there is no need whatever to love people, to abstain from stealing, to respect

the chastity of women, and so on—in fact, just the opposite is the case! All that would only cramp his activity and undoubtedly interfere with his success. As a rule, his whole life is nothing but stealing; he robs thousands of people, the whole country—that's essential for the increase of capital, that is, for the country's progress—understand? He seduces women by the dozen—it's a very delightful pastime for a man of leisure. And whom is he to love? For him, all people fall into two groups—one group he robs, the other competes with him in robbing the first."

Pleased with his knowledge of the subject, my speaker smiled and, tossing the cigar-end into a corner, continued:

"And so, morality is useful to the rich man and bad for people at large, but at the same time it is superfluous for him and obligatory for everybody else. That's why the moralists try to drill the principles of morality into the inside of people's heads, but themselves always wear them on the outside, like ties or gloves. The next question is, how to persuade people that they must submit to the laws of morality? Nobody cares to be the one honest man among thieves. But if you can't persuade them—hypnotise them! That always works. . . ."

He nodded emphatically and, with a wink at me, repeated:

"You can't persuade them—then hypnotise them!"

Then he put his hand on my knee, peered into my face, and lowering his voice, went on:

"The rest is between ourselves, agreed?"

I nodded.

"The Bureau I work for hypnotises public opinion. It's one of America's most original institutions, I'll have you know!" he added proudly.

I nodded my head again.

"You know," he said, "that our country lives with the one idea of making money. Everybody wants to be rich here, and a fellow-man is just something from which a few grains of gold can always be squeezed. And the whole of life is a process of extracting gold from human flesh and blood. The people in this country—and everywhere else,

I've heard—are just ore from which yellow metal is refined; progress is the concentration of the physical energy of the masses, that is, the crystallisation of human flesh, bone and nerve into gold. Life's very simply arranged. . . ."

"Is that your own view?" I queried.

"That? Why, of course not," he said with pride. "It's simply somebody's fancy. . . . I don't remember how it got into my head. . . . I only use it when I'm talking to people who . . . aren't quite normal. . . . Well, to continue. The people here have no time to indulge in vice—they have no leisure left for that. The hours of hard work so exhaust a man that he has neither the strength nor the desire left to sin in his leisure hours. People have no time to think, they have no energy to desire anything, they live only in their work and in order to work, and that makes their lives highly moral. Except that once in a while, on a holiday, a few fellows will string up a couple of Niggers; but then, that doesn't transgress against morality, because a Nigger isn't a white man, and besides, there are lots of these Niggers around. Everybody behaves more or less respectably, and against the drab background of this stolid life, confined within the narrow compass of the old Puritan morality, any breach of its principles stands out like a smudge of soot. That's a good thing, but it's bad too. The upper classes of society can take pride in the conduct of the lower, but at the same time this sort of conduct cramps the style of the rich. They've got money—that means they have the right to live as they please, without bothering about morality. The rich are greedy, the gluttons—sensual, the idle—dissolute. Weeds thrive on rich soil, profligacy—on a soil of satiety. What's to be done then? Repudiate morality? That's impossible, because it would be stupid. If your interests require people to be moral, then manage to keep your vices out of sight. . . . That's all. Nothing particularly new in it. . . ."

He glanced over his shoulder and dropped his voice still lower.

"And so, some society people in New York hit on a wonderfully happy idea. They decided to institute in this coun-

try a secret society for overt violation of the laws of morality. A sizable capital was built up from contributions, and Bureaus for hypnotising public opinion were opened—under cover, of course—in different towns. They hired various people like your humble servant, and gave them the job of committing offences against morality. Each Bureau is headed by a dependable and experienced man, who directs its operations and distributes the assignments.... As a rule, it's some newspaper editor...."

"I don't understand the purpose of the Bureaus!" I said unhappily.

"It's quite simple!" He returned. All of a sudden, his face took on an expression of uneasiness and nervous expectancy. He got up and, putting his hands behind his back, began walking slowly about the room.

"Quite simple," he repeated. "I've told you that the lower classes don't sin much—they haven't the time. On the other hand, it's essential to have morality sinned against!—after all, you can't leave it to be a barren old maid. There's got to be a perpetual clamour about morality, that deafens the public and keeps it from hearing the truth. If you throw a lot of small chips into a river, quite a big log can float past among them unperceived. Or if you incautiously extract the wallet from your neighbour's pocket, but promptly sidetrack attention to an urchin who has stolen a handful of nuts, it may save you from unpleasantness. Just shout 'Catch that thief!' as loud as you can. What our Bureau does is to create a host of minor disturbances by way of covering up big offences."

He gave a sigh, stopped in the middle of the room and said nothing for a few moments.

"For example, rumour gets about town that a certain prominent and respected citizen beats his wife. The Bureau promptly orders me and a few other agents to beat our wives. We duly beat them. The wives know all about it, of course, and scream for all they are worth. All the papers write up the story, and the commotion they raise blots out the rumours about the prominent citizen's abuse of his wife. Why worry your head about rumours, when

here are solid facts? Or maybe talk will start about Senators being bribed. At once the Bureau arranges several cases of bribery of police officials, and exposes their corruption to the public. Again the rumours are submerged by facts. Somebody in high society insults a woman. Right away, it is arranged that in restaurants, in the streets, a number of women shall be insulted. The society gentleman's offence disappears from sight entirely in a series of similar offences. And it's that way always, in everything. A big theft has a multitude of petty larcenies piled on top of it, and all big crimes generally are snowed under with trifles. That is what the Bureau does."

He walked over to the window, peered out cautiously into the street, and sat down again, continuing in the same undertone:

"The Bureau shields the upper class of American society from the judgement of the people; and at the same time, by evoking a perpetual outcry about breaches of morality, fills the people's heads with petty scandals staged to cover up the vices of the rich. The people are in a state of chronic hypnosis, they have no time to think for themselves, and only believe to what the papers tell them. The papers belong to the millionaires, the Bureau is sponsored by them too.... Get the point? It's a very smart idea...."

He stopped and fell to thinking, head bent low.

"Thank you," I said. "You've told me a lot that's very interesting."

He raised his head and gave me a gloomy look.

"Y-yes, it's interesting, of course," he brought out slowly and reflectively. "But it's beginning to tire me. I'm a family man, three years ago I built a house of my own.... I'd like to have a bit of a rest. It's very wearing, this job of mine. Maintaining respect for the laws of morality is no easy matter, believe me. Look: liquor is bad for me, but I have to get drunk; I love my wife and like quiet home life—and here I have to gad about restaurants, make rows... and forever see myself in the papers.... Under a false name, of course, but still.... Some day my own name will come out, and then... then I'll have to get out of the

town. . . I need advice. . . I've come to ask your opinion about something . . . a very perplexing business!"

"Go ahead!" I told him.

"You see," he began, "it's like this. Down in the Southern state, the upper classes have taken lately to keeping Negro mistresses . . . two and three at a time. People have started talking. The wives don't like it. Some of the papers have received letters from women exposing their husbands. There may be a big scandal. The Bureau has at once gone about producing 'counterfacts', as we call them. Thirteen agents, and I'm one of them, are to get themselves Negro mistresses. Two or even three at the same time. . . ."

He jumped up nervously and, putting his hand to his breast pocket, declared:

"I can't do it! I love my wife . . . and she wouldn't let me, anyway! If there only had to be one!"

"Why don't you refuse?" I suggested.

He gave me a pitying look.

"And who's going to pay me fifty dollars a week? And a bonus if the thing goes well? No, no, you can keep that sort of advice for yourself. . . . An American doesn't refuse money even the day after he's dead. Think of something else."

"I find it hard," I said.

"Hard? Why should you find it hard? You Europeans are very lax on the moral side. . . . Your moral iniquity is notorious."

He said it with a firm conviction of its being true.

"Look here," he went on, bending forward towards me, "you probably have some European friends? I'm sure you must have!"

"What do you want them for?" I asked.

"What do I want them for?" He stepped back a pace and struck an attitude. "I tell you, I simply cannot take on this job with the Negro girls. Judge for yourself: my wife won't allow it, and I love her. No, I positively can't. . . ."

He shook his head vigorously, passed his hand over its bald surface, and continued ingratiatingly:

"Maybe you could recommend some European for the job? They don't recognise morality, so it doesn't matter to them. Some poor immigrant, eh? I'd pay him ten dollars a week—that's fair, isn't it? I'll go about with the Negresses myself . . . in fact, I'll do everything myself—he'll only have to see to it that children result. . . . It's got to be settled tonight. . . . Just think what a scandal may flare up if this business in the South isn't buried in time under a lot of fakes! If morality is to triumph, there's no time to lose. . . ."

. . . When he had rushed out of the room, I went over to the window and held my hand, bruised against his skull, to the glass pane to cool it.

He was standing below and making signs to me.

"What do you want?" I asked, opening the window.

"I forgot my hat," he said modestly.

I picked up the derby from the floor and tossed it into the street. And as I closed the window, I heard him making this business proposition:

"Suppose I offer fifteen dollars a week? It's good money!"

1906

The Lords of Life

"Come with me to the fountains of truth!" the Devil said, laughing, and he brought me to the cemetery.

As we slowly wound our way along narrow paths between the old tombstones and cast-iron slabs he spoke in the tired voice of an old professor weary of the barren preaching of his wisdom.

"Beneath your feet," he said to me, "lie the makers of the laws that you are governed by. With the sole of your boot you trample upon the ashes of the carpenters and blacksmiths who built a cage for the beast you have inside you."

He laughed as he said this, and the laugh was full of a scourging contempt for people; the cold, greenish glint of

his tormented eyes fell on grass on the graves and the mould on the tombstones. The rich soil of the dead stuck to my feet in heavy clods, and it was hard going along the footpaths, among the tombstones which marked the graves of worldly wisdom.

"Man, why don't you bend low in gratitude before the dust of those who moulded your soul?" the Devil said in a voice which was like the draught of a damp autumnal wind. It sent a shiver down my spine, and my heart was chilled and wrung with sadness. The melancholy trees above the old graves swayed gently, brushing my face with their cold, wet branches.

"Pay homage to the counterfeiters! It is they who produced the swarms of petty grey thoughts that are the small coin of your intellect. It is they who formed your habits, your prejudices, and all you live by. Give them your thanks—the dead have left you a tremendous legacy!"

Yellow leaves slowly floated down on my head and dropped at my feet. The graveyard soil gave out a greedy smacking sound as it gorged on this fresh food: the dead leaves of autumn.

"Here lies a tailor who clothed the souls of men in heavy grey robes of prejudice. Would you care to take a look at him?"

I nodded in acquiescence. The Devil kicked the old corroded slab on one of the graves, he kicked it and he said:

"Hey, you, bookwright! Get up. . ."

The slab rose, there was a heavy sigh of disturbed slush, and a shallow grave, like a worm-eaten purse, was revealed. From out of its wet murk came a querulous voice:

"Who ever heard of waking the dead after twelve?"

"You see?" the Devil said with a grin. "The makers of the laws of life are true to themselves even after they rot away."

"Oh, it's you, Master!" the skeleton said, seating himself on the edge of the grave and greeting the Devil with a haughty nod of his hollow skull.

"Yes, its me!" the Devil replied. "I brought one of my friends to see you. . . He has grown stupid among the

men you taught wisdom, and now has come to its primary source to be cured of the infection he contracted. . . ."

I looked at the sage with proper deference. No flesh was left on his skull, but the look of smugness had not faded from his face. Each bone shone dully with the consciousness of its belonging to a system of bones of absolute perfection, to a unique system. . . .

"Tell us what you did on earth," the Devil suggested.

Haughtily and pompously, the dead man smoothed down with the bones of his arms the dark shreds of shroud and flesh that hung like a pauper's rags on his ribs. Then he proudly raised the bones of his right arm shoulder level, and, pointing with the bare joint of his finger into the darkness of the graveyard, he began to speak calmly and impassively:

"I wrote ten big books which impressed on the people's minds the great idea of the superiority of the white race over the coloured. . . ."

"Translated into the language of truth," the Devil rejoined, "it would sound like this: I, a sterile old maid, have all my life used the dull needle of my mind to knit fool-scaps from the frayed wool of threadbare ideas for those who like to keep their skulls nice and warm. . . ."

"Aren't you afraid of offending him?" I quietly asked the Devil.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Men of wisdom lend but a poor ear to truth even when they're alive."

"Only the white race," the sage went on, "could have created so advanced a civilisation and worked out such strict moral principles, thanks to the colour of its skin and the chemical composition of its blood, as I proved. . . ."

"He proved it!" the Devil echoed with a nod of assent. "There is no barbarian more settled in his belief that cruelty is his birth right than a European. . . ."

"Christianity and humanism are the products of the white race," the dead man continued.

"Of a race of angels who should rule the world," the Devil broke in. "That is why they so zealously dye it their favourite colour—red, the colour of blood. . . ."

"They have created great literature and miraculous machines," the dead man said, twitching his finger bones....

"Some thirty good books and countless guns for the extermination of men....", the Devil explained with a laugh. "Where else is life so broken up and man brought so low as among the whites?"

"Could it be that the Devil is not always right?" I ventured.

"The art of the Europeans has reached an immeasurable height," the skeleton mumbled in a dull, rasping voice.

"Say rather that the Devil would like to be mistaken!" my companion exclaimed. "It's terribly boring to be always right. But men live only so as to give food to my scorn.... The seeds of vulgarity and falsehood yield the richest harvests in the world. Here is one of the sowers before you now. Like all of them—he did not bring forth anything new, he only revived the corpses of old prejudices by clothing them in the garb of new words.... What has been done on earth? Palaces have been built for the few, churches and factories for the many. Souls are crippled in the churches and bodies in the factories, so that the palaces may stand intact.... Men are sent deep down into the earth for coal and gold—and in payment for this degrading work they get a piece of bread seasoned with lead and steel."

"Are you a socialist?" I asked the Devil.

"I want harmony!" he replied. "It makes me sick when man, by nature an entity, is shattered into matchwood, made a tool for the greedy hand of another. I don't want slaves—slavery is repulsive to my spirit.... That is why I was banished from heaven. Where idols exist, spiritual slavery is inevitable and the mould of falsehood will ever spread.... Let the earth live—all of it! Let it burn all day even though nothing but ashes are left of it by night. Once in their lives all people ought to fall in love.... Love, like a wondrous dream, comes only once, but in this one moment there is all the meaning of existence...."

The skeleton stood leaning against a black rock, and the wind moaned softly in the empty cage of his ribs.

"He must be cold and uncomfortable," I said to the Devil.

"I enjoy looking at a scientist who has freed himself of everything superfluous. His skeleton is the skeleton of his idea.... I can see how original it was.... Next to this one lie the remains of another sower of truth.... Let's wake him, too. In their lifetime they all like peace and quiet, and they labour to devise codes of thought, sentiments and life—they distort newborn ideas and make cosy little coffins for them. But after death—they want to be remembered.... Comprachikos—get up! I've brought you a man who needs a coffin for his thoughts."

And once again a bare and empty skull, toothless, yellow, yet glistening with self-satisfaction, emerged from the earth. He must have been lying there for a long time—his bones were entirely bare of flesh. He stood by his tombstone, and his ribs were silhouetted against the black stone like the stripes on the uniform of an officer of the court.

"Where does he keep his ideas?" I enquired.

"In his bones, my friend, in his bones! Their ideas are like rheumatism or gout—they penetrate deep into the ribs".

"How is my book selling, Master?" the skeleton asked in a flat voice.

"It's still lying on the shelves, Professor!" the Devil replied.

"Why, have people forgotten how to read?" the professor brought out after a moment's reflection.

"No, they still read nonsense quite willingly—but boring nonsense sometimes has to wait a long while before it claims their attention.... The professor here," said the Devil turning to me, "spent his whole life measuring women's skulls to prove that a woman is not a human being. He measured hundreds of skulls, he counted teeth, he measured ears, he weighed dead brain matter. Working with dead brains was the professor's favourite occupation. All his books evidence this. Have you read them?"

"I don't walk into a temple through a pub," I rejoined, "and I don't know how to study human beings by reading

about them—people in books are always fractions, and I'm weak in arithmetic. But I do think that a human being who has no beard and goes around in a skirt is no better and no worse than one who has a beard and a moustache and wears pants...."

"Yes," said the Devil, "vulgarity and stupidity invade the brain irrespective of clothes and hairdos. But, still, that problem of women has been quaintly put." At this the Devil laughed, as was his wont, which is one reason why it's so pleasant to chat with him. He who can laugh in a graveyard loves life and loves men—assuredly....

"Some, who require a woman only as a wife and slave, maintain that she is not a human being at all," he went on. "Others would like to exploit her working energy without refusing to use her as a woman, and these claim that she is no less suited for work than a man and can work on an equal basis with him, that is, for him. But, of course, neither of them would admit a girl they had raped into their society—they are convinced that after they touch her she remains forever sullied.... Yes, the feminine problem is frightfully amusing! I like it when men tell naïve lies—at such moments they resemble children, and one has hope that in time they will grow up...."

I could see from the Devil's face that he was on the point of saying something unflattering about the men of the future. But since I myself can say much that is not flattering about the men of today, and, not wishing to let the Devil compete with me in this pleasant and easy pastime, I interrupted him:

"There's a saying that where the Devil hasn't time to go himself he sends a woman. Is that true?"

He shrugged his shoulders and said, "It does happen.... If there's no man around who is clever and mean enough...."

"It strikes me somehow that you've lost your love for evil," I challenged.

"There is no such thing as evil any more!" he replied with a sigh. "Only vulgarity! Evil was once a power that had beauty. And now—even when men are killed it is

grossly done: first their hands are tied. There are no more villains left—only executioners. And an executioner is nothing but a slave, a hand and an axe set in motion by the power of fright, by the twinges of fear.... Men kill those they are afraid of...."

Two skeletons stood side by side at their graves, and the autumn leaves slowly drifted down on their bones. The wind played a doleful melody on the strings of their ribs and howled in the voids of their skulls. Humid and strong-scented darkness looked out from the deep sockets of their eyes. They were both shivering. I felt sorry for them.

"Let them go back to their places!" I entreated.

"So you are a humanist even in the graveyard!" he exclaimed. "Well, humanism is far more in place among the dead: here it can offend no one. In prisons and mines, in the factories, on city squares and streets, wherever there are living people, humanism is ridiculous and is even apt to kindle wrath. Here there is no one to mock at it—the dead are always serious. And I am certain that they enjoy hearing about humanism—after all, it is their still-born child.... No, they weren't idiots, those who wanted to place this splendid side scene on the stage of life to conceal the black horror of man persecuted, and the cold cruelty of a small group which owes its strength to the stupidity of all men...."

And the Devil broke into a laugh, the harsh laugh of sinister truth.

Stars quivered in the dark sky. The black stones stood motionless over the graves of the past. A rotting smell seeped from the earth, and the wind carried the breath of the dead into the drowsy city streets enveloped in the stillness of the night.

"There are quite a few humanists lying here," the Devil went on, taking in the graves about him with a sweeping gesture. "Some of them were actually sincere—there are plenty of droll misunderstandings in life, and maybe this one isn't the funniest.... And next to them, peacefully and amicably, lie men of another type, the teachers of life who attempted to lay a solid foundation under the old

edifice of lies that was so painstakingly and laboriously erected by thousands upon thousands of the dead...."

From afar came the sound of singing.... Two or three gleeful cries floated, quivering, over the cemetery. Some reveller, most likely, was tramping lightheartedly in the dark to his grave.

"Under this heavy stone there proudly rot the remains of a sage who taught that society is an organism similar to a monkey or a pig—I've forgotten which now. It's just the right thing for people who like to consider themselves the brain of the organism. Nearly all politicians and most of the gangster leaders stick to this theory. If I'm the brain, why, then I can move the hands at will and I'll always be able to overcome the instinctive resistance of the muscles to my regal power—oh, yes! And here rests the dust of one who urged men to revert to the time when they walked on all fours and devoured worms. Those were the happiest days of Man's existence, he insisted. To walk about on your two feet wearing an elegant frock coat and advise people to grow hairy again like their ancestors— isn't that what you'd call original? To read poetry, listen to music, visit museums, travel hundreds of miles in a day, and yet teach people to go back to a primitive life in the forests and to crawl on all fours—not half bad, really! Now this one here tried to pacify people and justify the kind of life they led by claiming that criminals were not like others, that they were men with a sick will, a peculiar anti-social type. He maintained that since they were natural enemies of the laws and morals of society, there was no reason to stand on ceremony with them, and he affirmed that death was the only cure for those addicted to crime. Bright idea that! Make one individual responsible for the crimes of all by recognising him for a natural receptacle of vice and an organic bearer of evil—not foolish at all. You can always find someone who will try to justify the ugly, soul-distorting structure of life. The wise won't even blow their noses without a good reason. Ah yes, the graveyards abound in ideas for improving life in the towns...."

The Devil took a look round him. A white church, like the finger of a giant skeleton, mutely rose from the copious field of the dead and pointed up at the dark sky, a silent meadow of stars. A dense throng of mould-covered stones standing over the founts of wisdom, surrounded this chimney, which sent across the wastes of the universe the stinging smoke of people's complaints and prayers. The wind, laden with the oily smell of decay, softly swayed the branches of the trees, snipping off the dead leaves which fell without a sound onto the dwellings of the makers of life....

"Now we'll arrange a small parade of the dead, a rehearsal for the Day of Judgment!" the Devil said as he marched ahead of me down a path that wound like a snake among the mounds and stones. "Judgment Day will come, you know! It will come here, on earth, and it will be humanity's happiest day! It will come when people realise at last the immensity of the crimes committed by the teachers and lawmakers of life who tore the human being up into worthless pieces of senseless flesh and bone. All that now goes under the name of man is but parts of him. A whole man has not yet been created. He will rise up from the ashes of experience lived through by the world, and, absorbing the world's experience like the sea absorbs the rays of the sun, he will rise over the earth like another sun. I shall see it! I am creating this man, and he shall be!"

He was beginning to brag a little and to lapse into a lyrical mood which was rather unusual for a devil. I forgave him. What can you do? Life warps even the Devil, eating away with its poisonous acids his strongly-forged soul. Then again, all men have round heads, but their thoughts are angular, and everyone, when he looks in the mirror, sees a handsome face.

Pausing between some graves, the Devil bellowed in the voice of a master:

"Who among you is a wise and honest man?"

There was a moment of silence, then—suddenly—the ground rocked under my feet, as if thousands of lightnings had ripped up the earth from inside, or as if some giant

monster had stirred convulsively within its depths. The mounds seemed to be drifted over with dirty snow. Everything about us became a dirty yellow; everywhere, the skeletons swayed like blades of dry grass in the wind, filling the surrounding quiet with the grating of bones and the dry rub of joints against one another and against the tombstones. Jostling each other, the skeletons crept out on the stones; skulls popped out everywhere like dandelions; a thick grille of ribs surrounded me like a narrow cage; the skeletons' shins were tense and quivering under the weight of their gruesomely gaping hipbones; everything round us seethed in a mute ferment of activity. . . .

The cold laugh of the Devil drowned out all the impersonal sounds.

"Look. They've all crawled out, every last one of them," he said. "Even the town's halfwits. The earth vomited, throwing up from its bowels the dead wisdom of men. . . ."

The squelchy noise grew steadily—it was as if some invisible hand were greedily rummaging in a heap of wet litter, swept by the garbage man into a corner of the yard.

"Look at the number of wise and honest men that lived in the world!" the Devil exclaimed, spreading his wings wide over the thousands of broken fragments that pressed close to him on all sides.

"Which of you has done people the most good?" he asked in a loud voice.

There was a noise like mushrooms sizzling when they are fried in sour cream on a large pan.

"Let me through, please!" someone cried in a peevish voice.

"I'm your man, Master, I'm your man! It was I who proved that the individual is a nought in the sum of society."

"I went even further than he," a voice called out protestingly from afar, "I taught that all of society is a sum of noughts, and that because of this the mass must do what the group wills."

"And the group is led by a unity that is, by me!" someone pronounced in a solemn tone.

"Why you?" several voices rejoined in alarm.

"My uncle was a king!"

"Ah, then it was Your Highness's uncle whose head was cut off so prematurely?"

"Kings always lose their heads dead on time," the bones of a descendant of bones who had once sat on the throne proudly returned.

"Oho!" someone brought out in a delighted whisper. "There's a king among us! It's not every graveyard that can boast of that. . . ."

Humid murmurs and the grating of bones were beginning to merge into a tangle of sound that steadily became heavier and more dense.

"Look here, is it true that the bones of royalty are blue in colour?" a stunted skeleton with a crooked spine breathlessly inquired.

"Let me tell you. . . ." a skeleton who sat astride a monument impressively began.

"The best plaster for corns was invented by me!" someone behind him cried.

"I am the architect. . . ."

Then a short squat skeleton, pushing everyone away with the stumpy bones of his hands, shouted above the din of the other dead voices:

"Brothers in Christ! Am not I your spiritual physician? Did not I use the plaster of gentle solace to remove the callosities from your souls, caused by suffering?"

"There is no suffering!" someone declared in a nettled tone. "Everything exists in imagination only."

"...the architect who devised low-structured doors. . . ."

"And I invented flypaper!"

"...so that people as they entered a house would inevitably bow their heads before its owner. . . ." the irksome voice persisted.

"Does not priority belong to me, brethren? It was I who gave those who craved forgetfulness the sustenance of my meditations on the vanity of all things worldly!"

"All that is—shall be!" someone's rasping voice announced.

A one-legged skeleton, who sat on a grey stone, raised his leg, stretched it out, and yelled for some reason or other:

"Hear, hear!"

The graveyard turned into a market where everyone praised his goods. A turbid river of stifled cries, a flood of foul bragging and crass vanity rushed into the dark and silent waste of night. It was as if a cloud of gnats were circling over a putrid swamp, droning, buzzing, and polluting the air with its noxious fumes, with all the poisonous vapours of the graves. Everyone was crowding about the Devil, their teeth clenched and their dark eye sockets fixed unmovingly on his face as though he were buying up old junk. Dead thoughts revived one after another, spinning in the air like the dreary leaves of fall.

The Devil watched this bubbling ferment with his green eyes, their cold stare flooding the heaps of bones with a shimmering phosphoric light.

The skeleton who sat at his feet raised his arm bones above his skull and, swinging them rhythmically, said: "Every woman should belong to one man..."

Another sound stole into his whisper, and the words he said were strangely entangled with another's speech.

"Only the dead have a knowledge of truth!..."

More words came:

"The father, said I, is like a spider..."

"Our life on the earth is a chaos of delusions, a mire of stark ignorance!"

"I was thrice married, and all three times in church..."

"All his life he ceaselessly weaves the web of the family's welfare..."

"...and to one woman each time..."

Suddenly a new skeleton appeared. His yellow, porous bones creaked shrilly. He raised his half-decayed face to the level of the Devil's eyes and said:

"I died of syphilis, yes! But still I had respect for the morals of society! When I discovered that my wife was

unfaithful to me I myself had the court and society try her for her infamous conduct..."

But he was pushed away, jostled on all sides by the bones of other skeletons, and a multitude of voices broke out again in a low howling drone like that of the wind in a chimney.

"I invented the electric chair! It kills quite painlessly..."

"After death, I said to the people in solace, eternal bliss awaits you..."

"The father gives the children life and food... a man is only complete when he becomes a father, till then he is but a member of a family..."

A skeleton with an egg-shaped skull and with shreds of flesh on his face called out above the heads of the others:

"I proved that art must be made to conform with the whole complex of the views and opinions, habits and needs of society..."

Another skeleton, who sat astride a monument that was supposed to represent a broken tree, retorted:

"Freedom can only exist in the form of anarchy!"

"Art is a pleasant cure for a soul tired of life and of work..."

"It was I who affirmed that life is work," a voice called from afar.

"A book must be as pretty as the little pillboxes you get in a drugstore..."

"All people must work and some of them must oversee the work... All those whose virtues and merits make them deserving are entitled to the fruit of their labour..."

"Art must be altruistic and harmonious... When I am tired I want it to sing to me of leisure..."

"And I like free art," the Devil said, "which serves no other deity but the goddess of beauty. I love it especially when, like a chaste youth who dreams of immortal beauty and craves to delight in it, art tears the bright garments off the body of life... and life stands before it, an old libertine, her flabby skin covered with wrinkles and sores. A mad wrath, a longing for beauty, a hatred for the

stagnant mire of life—that is what I seek in art. . . . A good poet's friends are the Devil and the woman. . . .”

A loud moan of copper broke from the bell tower and drifted over the city of the dead, swaying liltily and invisibly in the dark, like a large bird with transparent wings. . . . A sleepy watchman must have lazily pulled the bell rope with a lax, unsteady hand. The brazen sound melted in the air and died. But before its last thrill had faded, the bell of night, roused and alert, rang out again, sharp and clear. The sultry air vibrated softly, and through the gloomy drone of quivering copper there stole the rustle of bones, and the crackle of dry voices.

Again I heard the dull tirades of excruciating stupidity, the sticky words of dead vulgarity, the insolent voices of triumphant hypocrisy, the vexed grumble of self-conceit. All the thoughts that people live by in the towns came to life, but not one of which they could be proud. All the rusty chains that fetter the soul of life jangled and clanged, but the light that proudly illumines the darkness of men's souls flared never once.

“Where are the heroes?” I asked of the Devil.

“They are modest, and their graves are forgotten. They were oppressed in life, and in the graveyard, too, the dead bones crush them!” he replied, waving his wings to dispel the oily smell of decay that closed in on us like a dark cloud in which the grey, dull voices of the dead wriggled like worms.

The shoemaker said that he deserved the greatest thanks among his confreres for inventing sharp-pointed shoes. A scientist who had described a thousand different varieties of spiders in his book averred that he was the greatest of all scientists. An inventor of dry milk whimpered irritably, pushing back the man who had invented a rapid-fire gun and who stubbornly kept explaining to everyone around him the usefulness of his invention to the world. Thousands of thin, moist ropes tightened on the brain, biting into it like the fangs of a snake. And all the dead, no matter what their subject, spoke like severe moralists,

like the gaolers of life who are enraptured by the work they are doing.

“Enough!” roared the Devil, “I'm tired of this. . . . I'm sick of everything I see in the graveyards of the dead and in the towns, the graveyards of the living. . . . You, custodians of truth! Go to your graves! . . .”

His voice was the steel voice of a master who was disgusted with the power that was his.

At this the ash-grey and yellow mass hissed, stirred, and foamed like the dust on the road when hit by a whirlwind. The earth opened thousands of dark maws, and, smacking lazily like a sow that has had its fill, swallowed once more the food it had thrown up and began to digest it anew. . . . All at once everything vanished, the stones moved and fell back into their places to stand there as firmly and unmovingly as ever. But an oppressive smell that clutched at the throat like a heavy, moist hand still lingered.

The Devil seated himself on one of the graves and resting his elbows on his knees, squeezed his head with the long fingers of his black hands. His stare was fixed stonily on the mass of stones and graves in the dark. . . . The stars shone brilliantly above him; up in the sky that had grown visibly lighter the bold chimes of the bell drifted quietly, rousing the night from its sleep.

“Did you see that?” the Devil said to me. “A dark, confining structure of the laws of life has been erected on the perilous, slimy, poisonous soil of mouldy stupidity, plain falsehood and sticky vulgarity. A cage into which you were all driven by the dead like sheep. . . . Mental sluggishness and cowardice bind your prison cage like flexible bands. The true lords of your life are the dead; and even though you may be governed by living people, they too are inspired by the dead. The graves are the fountains of worldly wisdom. I say to you: your common sense is a flower that blooms on soil fed by the juices of dead bodies. The corpse soon rots away in the grave, yet he desires to live forever in the souls of the living. The fine, dry dust of dead ideas easily penetrates into the brain of the living; that is why

your preachers of wisdom are always preachers of the death of the spirit!"

The Devil raised his head, and his green eyes rested on my face like two cold stars.

"What is being propagated most loudly here on earth? What is it men seek to establish as an immutable law? It is the fractioning of life; the lawfulness of different conditions of life for the people and the necessity for a oneness of their souls; a brick-like uniformity of souls to make it easier to lay them out in the geometrical figures convenient to the few who govern. This sermon hypocritically calls for the conciliation of the bitterness of the enslaved with the cruel duplicity of the enslavers; it was called forth by a base desire to make away with the free spirit of protest. It is nothing but an infamous plan to build a vault of the stones of falsehood for man's free spirit. . . ."

Dawn set in. The stars faded softly in the sky, pale in expectation of the sun. But the eyes of the Devil burned brighter as he went on speaking.

"What should men be taught so they will learn to make their lives whole and beautiful?—Uniform conditions for all and a differentiation of souls. Then life will become a bush of flowers, the roots of which will draw strength from the respect of all for the freedom of each man. It will be a fire fed by the glowing coals of mutual friendship and the common urge to rise higher. . . . Only ideas will fight then, while men will stay comrades always. Do you think it's impossible?—I say it will be because it has not yet been!"

"Day is dawning!" the Devil went on, looking east. "But will the sun bring joy when night sleeps in man's very heart? The people have no time to enjoy the sun, most of them want only bread—some of them are busy giving out as little as possible of it; others move through the bustle of life in a lonely search for freedom, but it eludes them in their ceaseless struggle for bread. Miserable, despairing, embittered by their loneliness, they attempt to conciliate the irreconcilable. Thus do the best of men drown in the slime of vulgar lies—first, innocently, without noticing their

faithlessness to themselves; then consciously, with a deliberate betrayal of their earlier beliefs and ideas. . . ."

He rose and spread his powerful wings.

"I think I, too, will go along the road of my expectations towards a future of splendid possibilities. . . ."

And, followed by the dreary chiming of the bell—a dying clang of copper, he flew west. . . .

I told this dream to an American who seemed more like a human being than the rest. He became pensive for a moment, and then exclaimed with a smile:

"I get it! The Devil was an agent of a firm that deals in incinerators! Of course! What he said was an argument in favour of cremation. But he was a very competent agent, let me tell you! He was so eager to accommodate his firm that he even appeared in people's dreams. . . ."

1906

Articles

*Reply to a Questionnaire Received
From an American Magazine*

You ask:

“Does your country hate America, and what do you think of America’s civilisation?”

In the very fact that such questions are asked, and in such form, there is something monstrously exaggerated, overstrained, in typical American style. I cannot conceive of a European being capable of asking such questions in order to “make money”. And I must tell you that to your first question—as to all others—I am not authorised to reply on behalf of the 150 million citizens of my country, for I have no way of asking them what they think of your country.

I imagine that even in the countries whose blood your capitalists are coining into dollars—in the Philippines, in the South American republics, in China—and even among the ten million coloured people in the USA, one would not find a single intelligent person who would presume to tell you on behalf of his people: “Yes, my country, my people hate America, hate all her people, the workers as well as the billionaires, coloured as well as white; hate the women

and children, the fields, rivers, forests, beasts and birds, the past and present of your country, its science and scientists, its magnificent technology, Edison and Luther Burbank, Edgar Poe, Walt Whitman, Washington and Lincoln, Theodore Dreiser and Eugene O'Neill, Sherwood Anderson, all its gifted artists, and the splendid romantic Bret Harte, the spiritual father of Jack London—Thoreau, Emerson, and everything that makes up the United States of America and all who live in these states."

I hope you do not expect to find anyone idiotic enough to give such an insane answer to your question, an answer filled with such hatred for people and culture.

But, of course, what you call the civilisation of the USA does not and cannot excite my sympathies. I think your civilisation is the most deformed civilisation on our planet, because it has magnified to monstrous proportions all the many and shameful deformities of European civilisation. Europe is tragically enough corrupted by the cynicism of the class structure of the state; but still, Europe cannot as yet show a thing so pernicious and senseless as your billionaires and millionaires, men who present your country with degenerates. You remember the Boston murder, of course, when two rich youngsters killed a third out of sheer curiosity? And how many more such crimes are committed in your country out of curiosity, just "to be in the swim"? Europe too can boast a disfranchised and defenceless condition of her citizens; still, she has not yet sunk to such infamy as the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti. France had the "Dreyfus case", which was also shameful enough; but in France, Emile Zola and Anatole France came out in defence of the innocent victim, and brought thousands of people into action. In Germany, there developed after the war something in the nature of the Ku Klux Klan—an organisation of assassins; but there, they were tracked down and put in the dock; while in your country, that is not the practice; the Ku Klux Klan murders and shamelessly abuses coloured people and women; and all this with impunity, just as state governors make short work of socialist workers with impunity.

Europe does not have such an abomination as "Nigger-baiting", although she suffers from another disgraceful disease—anti-Semitism; this is a disease with which, as a matter of fact, America is also infected.

Crime is increasing gradually in Europe too, but it has not yet grown into what—judging by your newspapers—goes on in Chicago, where, besides the gangsters of the Exchange and the banks there are gangsters armed with guns and bombs doing just what they please. The gun fights brought on by the Prohibition in your country could not take place in Europe either; nor could there be a city mayor who publicly burned the books of English classics, as the mayor of Chicago did.

I do not believe Bernard Shaw would be entitled to give so sarcastic a reply to an invitation to any other country as he did when Willard, the editor of the *Nation*, invited him to come to America.

The capitalists of all countries are an equally revolting and inhuman breed, but yours are worse. Apparently they are more stupidly greedy for money. Incidentally, the word "businessman" I personally translate as "maniac".

Just think how stupid and shameful it all is: this fair planet of ours, which we have learnt to beautify and enrich at the cost of so much effort—nearly the whole of this earth of ours in the grasping clutches of a contemptible breed of men who are not capable of anything but making money. That magnificent creative force—the blood and brains of the scientists, the technicians, the poets, the workers, who build culture, our "second nature" is converted by these dullwitted individuals into little yellow discs of metal and the paper strips of cheques.

What do the capitalists create apart from money? Pessimism; envy; greed; and a hatred which will inevitably destroy them, but together with them it may, by the violence of its explosion, also destroy a multitude of cultural treasures. Your morbidly hypertrophied civilisation threatens you with appalling tragedies.

For myself, I am of course of the opinion that genuine civilisation and the rapid advancement of culture are pos-

sible only if political power is wholly in the hands of the working people—not of parasites living off the labour of others. And, of course, I would recommend proclaiming the capitalists a socially dangerous group of people, confiscating their property for the benefit of the state, shipping these people to some island in the ocean—and there let them quietly die off. That would be a very humane solution of the social problem, and quite in the spirit of “American idealism”, which is nothing but the ultra-naïve optimism of individuals who have not yet experienced the dramas and tragedies that in their sum are known as “the history of a people”.

1927-1929

The Bourgeois Press

The rubbish you find in second-hand markets tells you of the way people lived yesterday; the advertisements and police items in the newspapers give a good insight into the way people live today. When I say newspapers, I am referring to the modern “organs of public enlightenment” in the “cultural centres” of Europe and America. I consider it just as useful to read the bourgeois press as to listen to servants discussing the intimate life of their masters. Diseases cannot, and should not, interest a healthy man, but the doctor is in duty bound to study them. The physician and the journalist have something in common: they both diagnose and describe diseases. Our journalists are in a better position than the bourgeois journalists, for they are well familiar with the general causes of social pathological phenomena. The Soviet journalist should therefore be as attentive toward the testimony of the bourgeois press as the physician is toward the cries and groans of a patient. If some talented person were to come along in our country and gather a sufficient number of facts from the police chronicle in the newspapers of any “cultural centre”, and compare these facts with the advertisements of department stores, restaurants and houses of entertainment, and with

the descriptions of gatherings, receptions and public celebrations, and if he were to present all this material, using the technique of John Dos Passos in his extremely interesting novel *Manhattan Transfer* we should get a dazzling and staggering picture of the “cultural” life of present-day bourgeois society.

What do we find daily in the bourgeois press? Here, for instance, are some items it touched upon briefly in the past month of May.

“Reformatory Revolt”—fourteen boys run away from a reformatory, twelve are recaptured by mounted police, the whereabouts of the other two are unknown. “Another Minor Tortured.” “Mother Slays Her Children”—poisons two with gas; motive—starvation. “Another Gas Poisoning”—five asphyxiated; husband, wife, husband’s old mother, three-year-old girl and a baby boy. “Hunger Drives to Murder.” “Another Woman Hacked to Pieces.” “Accustomed to Jail”—a man released from prison after serving a five-year sentence goes to the police and says he is sick, cannot work and does not want to beg, and asks to be sent back to jail; the “just laws” of the bourgeois state do not permit this, so, being “accustomed” to jail, the man goes out and smashes a shop window and starts a fight with the police, and in this way gets what he wants. “Millionaire Pauper”—an old begger, eighty years old, dies, and five million krone are found among his effects. “Lord Ashton, 89, Dies, Leaving £20,000,000.” “Monster Trial”—three hundred persons in Lyons die from drinking water from contaminated city mains. “Mammoth Card Loss.” “Several murders were committed yesterday in various parts of the city; the bandits got away safely.” The word “safely” in this instance is not to be understood ironically, but as a sign of sympathy with the murderers.

Then there are reports of more or less big cases of fraud, corruption, sexual depravity ending in suicide and murder. Of course, I have enumerated only an insignificant fraction of the items published in the course of the month—ninety per cent of the rest are of a similar criminal and pathological nature. All this is recounted very briefly, tersely and

colourlessly; for the journalist to add a little animation or colour to his style, it is necessary for "another woman" to be hacked to pieces with unusually sadistic skill or for the Düsseldorf murderer, Kürten, a worker, to confess to fifty-three crimes and then "suddenly remark drily to the police investigator: 'What will you say if I now deny everything?'" That is a "sensation". But the work of the police in the bourgeois countries is becoming a series of sensations, and the case of Kürten should therefore not surprise the Soviet reader. You simply cannot understand why all this is published. The police chronicle evokes no "comment" in the bourgeois press. You feel that it has become commonplace, and that no one is outraged or alarmed by it. Formerly, before the war, people were outraged. Sentimental individuals used to write milk-and-water articles on the "diseases of the social organism" and voice various sentiments, which were sometimes prompted by alarm, but more often by the irritation of "cultured" people disturbed by "abnormal facts".

Nowadays the bourgeois press is not interested in the commonplace tragedies of life, for the daily death of tens and hundreds of humble individuals has long become the customary order of things, it has no effect on the tenor of life and constitutes no menace to the people who want to live merrily and tranquilly. Posh cinemas are multiplying daily and, still more posh restaurants, with jazz bands that shake the walls and ceilings. One is amazed by the abundance of advertisements of pills against "loss of vitality" and the remarkably eloquent advertisements of venerologists.

But you had this sensational stuff before 1914, you will say. Yes, but it was not so deafening. Now it seems that the bourgeois of the "cultural centres" have unanimously decided that

*Life grows shorter and shorter,
The days speed faster and faster.
Then, let us all our days and nights
Live merrier and merrier!*

This was preached from a nightclub pulpit by a spindle-shanked individual with a protruding stomach, heavily rouged cheeks and the insane eyes of a dope fiend.

I am laying it on too thick, you say? I have no desire to do so, because I know that dry rot is contagious. The colours of life are themselves becoming thicker and more lurid. Probably that is because the temperature of life is rising, and because the gaiety of the bourgeoisie is growing feverish. . . . The bourgeoisie tries to live gaily in order to drown a gloomy presentiment of its coming doom.

I think I know the work of the newspapermen of America and Europe pretty well. In my view they are journeymen, whose arduous and restless trade imbues them with a feeling of profound indifference to human beings; they very much resemble attendants in a mental hospital who are accustomed to regard patients and doctors alike as lunatics. This indifference explains the imperturbably dispassionate tone of their reports on the most diverse facts of life.

Here are some examples:

"A certain Hans Müller yesterday ate 72 sausages in 11 minutes for a wager."

"In 1928, 9,530 persons—6,690 men and 2,840 women—committed suicide in Prussia; 6,413 of the suicides were urban and 3,117 rural inhabitants."

"The municipality of Löwenberg, Silesia, decided to increase the city's revenue by introducing a tax on cats, but the city council turned down the proposal. The mayor has now resorted to a different device. He has traps set at night in the city park for prowling cats. The trapped animals may be redeemed by their owners at a ransom of three marks apiece."

"When bailiffs came to the parish of Niendorf, near Hamburg, to levy property for arrears of payments to the irrigation company, the peasants put up armed resistance and the bailiffs were forced to retire."

"A 'nocturnal ghost' is in the habit of visiting a pastor living in a Berlin suburb. After the pastor had been awaken-

ed three times by its 'indecent touch', he had the police called in. They found a hat under the pastor's window which is presumed to have been lost by the 'ghost'."

"Should women with bobbed hair be admitted to communion? This question was raised by a number of bishops, and was considered by the Vatican on May 24. The College of Cardinals have answered the question in the affirmative. The wearing of short hair is not contrary to Christian morals."

Last year a newspaperman reported that the police records show that in France about four thousand women disappear every year. Arrests of white slave traffickers were recently made in a number of French cities. The gang had sold 2,500 girls to brothels in South American republics. A similar organisation operated in Poland. A French journalist, A. Londre, has made a thorough study of this branch of the slave trade. His book, *Criminal Trade*, was put out last year in our country by the Federation Publishing House. It is an extremely interesting book; it describes in detail the methods of decoying and kidnapping girls, and their "work" in the brothels of Argentina. But the most instructive thing about this book is that it does not contain a single word of indignation.

On p. 10, Londre tells of his meeting with a white slave trafficker in the following words:

"Armand is a pimp. . . . I know what his business is. He knows who I am. He trusts me and I trust him—like businessmen."

Exactly: like businessmen—and nothing more, though the "business" is inhuman and vile enough in all conscience.

But to explain Londre's mentality, it would be appropriate to cite the exact words of an American journalist:

"A policeman is not obliged to think whether the man he is escorting to trial or to jail is innocent or not. I bring before the court of society people like themselves, and what has gone before or comes after doesn't concern me."

I heard this in New York in 1906, during a small unpleasantness staged by some pious Americans. I had

been thrown out of two hotels. So I planted myself with my trunks in the street, and decided to wait and see what would happen next. I was surrounded by reporters, about fifteen of them. In their own, American, way they were good fellows. They "sympathised" with me, and were even, I thought, rather embarrassed by the row. One of them was particularly likeable; a big chap with a wooden face and funny round eyes of unusual brilliance like two large blue beads. He was a celebrity. He was once sent by his paper to Manila, to arrange the jail break of a girl-revolutionary, a nationalist, who had been imprisoned by the Spaniards and who was threatened with the death penalty. This fellow guessed that I was quite willing to let the hotel trouble take its course. He persuaded the young writer, Leroy Scott, author of the novel *The Walking Delegate*, and his comrades of the Five Club to "take a hand in the affair". It later turned out that they could do nothing about it, but I was removed from the street to the "club"—the apartment where the five literary beginners lived in a "commune", and where Scott's wife, a Russian Jewess, kept house for them. The young writers used to gather in the evening in front of the fireplace in the "club's" spacious vestibule. Reporters came, and I talked to them about Russian literature, the Russian revolution, the Moscow insurrection (N. E. Burenin, member of the militant organisation of the Bolshevik Central Committee, Scott's wife, and M. F. Andreyeva translated what I said into English). The newspapermen listened, took notes, and, with a sigh of regret, said:

"It's all terribly interesting—but it's not for our papers."

I asked why their papers could not tell the truth about events which very likely were characteristic of the future of the new age.

But they understood my question in their own simple way, as something purely personal, and said:

"We are all with you, but we can't do anything about it. You will not find or earn money for the revolution here. When the press reported that Roosevelt intended to receive you, the Russian ambassador interfered, and that stops your

game. We see that it was not the photograph of Andreyeva the newspapers printed, and we know that your first wife and children are not living in poverty, but it is not in our power to expose it. They won't let you work for the revolution here."

"But why do they let Breshkovskaya?"

To this they did not reply. But they were mistaken: I was able to work, although I did less than I expected. (But that has nothing to do with the subject of this article.)

The journalists went on to acquaint me with the amazing power of the New York press. They gave some illustrations. A rich and influential lady philanthropist was accused by one newspaper of running a number of brothels. This was a first-class sensation. But a couple of days later this same paper printed the photographs of twenty-five policemen, who, it said, were the real organisers of secret prostitution, and not the highly respected lady in question.

"And what about the policemen?"

"They were dismissed, after having been suitably compensated. They will find jobs in other states."

Another instance. It was necessary to discredit a certain senator, so the story was printed that he did not get on with his second wife and that his children, college boys and girls—were at daggers drawn with their stepmother. The old man and his children wrote a denial. The paper printed it, but made a joke of it. The house where he lived was surrounded by reporters. . . .

1930

Capitalist Terror in America Against Negro Workers

The capitalists and their obedient servants—the Social-Democrats, and fascists, the Churchills and Kautskys, the old men driven half-crazy by fear of a social catastrophe and the astute young men who aspire to be big parasites,

the "pen gangsters and press pirates", all the biped scum bred by the capitalist system, all the vermin in human shape without which capitalism cannot exist—accuse the Bolsheviks of the Soviet Union of wanting to "destroy culture". The bourgeois press has been issued the slogan by its masters: "The fight against the Bolsheviks, the fight against Communism, is a fight for culture!"

The capitalists, needless to say, have something to fight for. Their "culture" consists of a series of institutions which operate quite freely with the object of defending and justifying the absolute and unlimited power of a parasitic minority over the labouring majority: the workers and peasants, and the petty bourgeois, who live by performing wretched little jobs for the big bourgeois. Their culture consists of schools where lies are told, of churches where lies are told, of parliaments where, too, lies are told, and a press which lies and calumniates. Their culture is the police, who have the right to manhandle and murder workers. Their culture has developed to an incredible height—to a continuous and daily war against the workers, who do not want to be robbed, do not want to be beggars, do not want their wives to become sick old women at thirty, their children to die of starvation and their daughters to prostitute themselves for a crust of bread, and who do not want crime—prompted by unemployment—to spread in the working people's honest midst.

In effect, the cultural life of bourgeois states amounts chiefly to street fighting between police and workers, to increasing the suicide rate from starvation, to the spread of petty larceny owing to unemployment, to growing prostitution. This is no exaggeration: the "police chronicle" of all the bourgeois newspapers is filled with facts of this kind. The "cultured" bourgeois world lives in a continuous state of war with the working class, and the war grows more and more sanguinary every day. A minority fighting for the right to rob the majority with impunity—that in a nutshell, is the whole cultural life of the present-day world outside the Soviet Union. In their war against the poor and hungry, the rich and well-fed try to weaken the working

class in its striving to organise for the decisive world-wide fight, by tearing from its midst, flinging into jail or killing its most active individuals, and at the same time they try to intimidate the mass of the workers by condemning to death innocent men, of which the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti was an example.

Just now, in America, in the town of Scottsboro, a tragedy is being enacted which is reminiscent of the case of these two Italians who, after they had been sentenced to the death penalty, were kept in jail for seven years waiting to be put on the electric chair. The humanitarians of all Europe and its working class protested against this murder of two innocently condemned men, but the protest did not produce a single crease in the wooden faces of the American millionaires. In Scottsboro, eight young Negroes have been condemned to death. They too are quite innocent. They were unacquainted with one another; they were arrested accidentally. Nevertheless they were sentenced to death. This was done in order to intimidate the Negroes; this murder is a "preventive measure". It is done because the Negro masses are being drawn more and more into the revolutionary movement and are taking their place side by side with the masses of white workers. They are beginning to take an active part in the struggle against American imperialism. Fearing the spread of the rebel spirit among the thirty million Negroes—workers and farmers—the bourgeoisie are doing their utmost to crush the growing fighting strength of the Negro masses. And the weapon they use is—white terror.

This is clearly to be seen in the bloody events at Camp Hill, Alabama. This case has added new fervour to and enhanced the importance of the campaign the working class of the world is waging against lynching and in defence of the American Negro workers.

This year the Negro share croppers of Tallapoosa County, Alabama, formed their own organisation. It is militant, and is taking an active part in the Scottsboro campaign. A fortnight ago it called a meeting of its members in a church to protest against the Scottsboro case. The

landowners mustered four hundred police and armed fascists, who attacked the church. In the course of the affray, Ralph Gray, the leader of the organisation, was severely wounded and was carried home by his comrades. When the fascist ruffians learned that Gray was still alive, they surrounded and broke into his home and shot him in his bed, in the presence of the doctor who was tending his wounds. The fascists wrecked many a Negro hut in their hunt for officials of the organisation. Four Negroes were carried off to the woods and lynched. Fifty-five Negroes have been arrested on a charge of "manslaughter". Five leading officers of the organisation are accused of "attempted murder". Sheriff Young, the ring-leader of the fascist band, was gravely wounded.

Take the jail in Harlan County, Kentucky, in the very heart of the East Kentucky mining region, which is a source of wealth to some of the biggest corporations in the country, and which has only hunger, poverty and death to offer the miners and their families. Nearly a hundred miners are locked up in the dark cells. Some of them are charged with murder, and are menaced with the death penalty. Many of them are accused of "belonging to organised bands", others of "criminal syndicalism", because they addressed meetings. Three months ago the miners went on strike in an attempt to improve their miserable conditions. Governor Sampson brought out the constabulary against the strikers, and the mine owners set gangs of armed fascists, sheriffs and police against them with orders to crush the strike with heavy guns and bombs. Thirty-one persons—eighteen miners and thirteen soldiers and fascists—were killed. The miners captured six guns with ammunition, raided a company store and seized provisions for their starving families.

Eighteen miners are threatened with the death penalty, fifty with long terms of imprisonment. Sixteen miners' homes were burned down. Miners' families are being evicted from their homes to this day.

In Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio, forty thousand miners are on strike, the majority of them Negroes. Most of the six hundred miners arrested on July 6 were

Negroes. When they were arrested they were beaten up and tortured.

The American section of the International Labour Defence is giving world prominence to the Scottsboro case. For the first time since the American Civil War, the brutal exploitation of the Negro masses by the ruling class of the United States is receiving international publicity and condemnation. The demand made by the American section of the ILD that execution of sentence be postponed for ninety days was supported all over the world. From the USSR, Britain, France, Australia, Cuba, Austria, Germany and many other countries came thousands of resolutions demanding the release of the eight Negro Scottsboro boys. American consulates in Germany and Cuba were besieged by thousands of demonstrating workers.

The eight Negro Scottsboro boys are still in prison with the threat of the electric chair hanging over them, and with the wardens telling them every day that they will soon be put on it.

"The world-wide campaign must be intensified. No meeting or demonstration should be held, no leaflet, no ILD paper should be issued without containing an appeal to the masses to raise their voice against the white terror American imperialism is resorting to in order to stifle the mounting indignation of the Negro masses in the United States." (From an appeal by the ILD Central Committee to all its sections and organisations.)

When the proletarians of all countries protest against the killing of their brothers, it is not, of course, because they reckon on persuading the capitalists not to kill. The capitalist cannot be "humane"—everything human except the brute beast in man is alien to him. If he donates dollars squeezed out of the workers to universities, he does so in order to consolidate his power. The teaching of Marx and Lenin is not taught at his universities, and if anyone suggested that lectures in dialectical materialism should be read to students he would be kicked out at once. It is the duty of the proletariat to protest against these murderers, but they should know that the murderers cannot stop

murdering, and that they will murder the finest of their fellows. The capitalist protects his dollars, and to him dollars are always more precious than any individual, no matter who that individual may be. The proletariat should know that Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were not killed by soldiers, but by the capitalists, and that it was not a half-crazy woman that fired at Lenin, but a mechanical tool of a definite system of thought—a tool of the vile, inhuman bourgeois way of thinking.

The proletariat should know that between them and the capitalists no agreement—"compromise" or truce—is possible. It is time the proletarians knew this. And it should also be firmly remembered that in 1914 the proletariat of Europe and America was betrayed to the capitalists by the Social-Democrats, and that this cost the workers thirty million lives. They should not forget that the "bloody hound", Noske, is also a Social-Democrat. And, in general, they should not forget the crimes committed against the working class by its diverse enemies, by traitors and scoundrels. All this must be remembered in order that the bloody villainies of the past may not be repeated in the future. And all this is easy to remember. One has only to watch the despicable activities of the Second International Socialists and all that the European capitalists are undertaking against the Union of Socialist Soviets.

The workers of Europe and America should realise that when they work in munition factories they are manufacturing rifles, machine guns and guns to be used against themselves. The capitalists will not themselves go and fight if they make up their minds to start war against the Soviet Union—they will send their workers and peasants to the fields of death, to fight the workers and peasants who have abolished capitalism in their own country. Every capitalist war means suicide for the working class.

The working class of Europe and America should protest against individual murders of workers by the capitalists. It should protest, because this helps to foster in it the sentiment of international class solidarity—and the broadening and deepening of this sentiment is something the working

class of Europe and America needs very badly. But even more solid, resolute and stormy should be its protest against every attempt on the part of the capitalists to engineer another world slaughter of workers and peasants.

The best, the surest and most practical way of preventing such a slaughter is for the socialist workers to go over en masse to the Communist Parties.

The Third International is a real leader of the workers, because it is a workers' international. It will not betray them. It recognises the necessity for only one war—a war of the proletarians of all countries against the international capitalist gang, against those who live by the labour of others.

1931

*On Whose Side,
"Masters of Culture"?
Reply to American
Correspondents*

You write: "You will probably be surprised by this message from people across the ocean with whom you are unacquainted."

No, your letter did not surprise me; I get such letters quite frequently. And you are mistaken when you refer to it as "original"—outcries of alarm from intellectuals have become quite common these past two or three years. This is natural: the chief job of the intellectual has always in effect been to adorn the existence of the bourgeoisie, to console the rich in their moments of vulgar tribulation. Handmaidens of the capitalists, the intellectuals, or the majority of them, assiduously patched with white thread the philosophical and religious habiliments of the bourgeoisie, habiliments which have long grown soiled and threadbare and which are plentifully stained in the blood of the working people. To this day they continue to perform this difficult, not very praiseworthy and absolutely useless work, betray-

ing an almost prophetic prevision. For example, even before the Japanese imperialists proceeded to dismember China, Spengler, the German philosopher, in his book *Man and Technique*, wrote that the Europeans of the nineteenth century had committed a most serious blunder in imparting their knowledge and technical experience to the "coloured races". In this view Spengler is supported by your American historian, Hendrik van Loon; he also holds that equipping the black and yellow peoples with the experience of European culture was one of the "seven fatal historical mistakes" of the European bourgeoisie.

And now we observe a desire to correct this mistake; the European and American capitalists supply the Japanese and Chinese with money and arms and help them to destroy one another, and at the same time send their fleets to the East in order, at a convenient moment, to show their mighty armed fist to Japanese imperialism and proceed together with the brave rabbit to share the skin of the slain bear. Personally, I think the bear will not be slain, because there are one or two things the Spenglers, van Loons and similar consolars of the bourgeoisie who dilate on the dangers menacing European-American "culture", forget to mention. They forget that the Indians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Negroes are not socially monolithic and homogeneous but are split up into classes. They forget that against the venom of the selfish thoughts of the European and American philistines, the antidote of the teachings of Marx and Lenin has been elaborated and is having a very healthy effect. It is possible, however, that they have not really forgotten this, but only keep a tacit silence about it, and that their cries of alarm regarding the downfall of European culture are due to their realisation of the impotence of the poison and the potency of the antidote.

Ever greater grow the numbers of those who howl that civilisation is perishing, and ever louder their howls. In France, some three months ago, ex-Minister Caillaux publicly lamented the insecurity of civilisation.

"The world," he cried, "is suffering from the tragedies of abundance and distrust. Is it not a tragedy that wheat has to be burned and bags of coffee thrown into the sea, when millions of people have not enough to eat? As to distrust, it has done harm enough already. It caused the war and dictated the peace treaties, which can be rectified only when distrust disappears. If trust is not restored, all civilisation will be endangered, because the peoples might be tempted to overthrow an economic system to which they attribute all their ills."

One must either be an arrant hypocrite or utterly naïve to speak of the possibility of mutual trust among the marauders who are today so frankly baring their talons and fangs at one another. And if by the "people" is meant the working people, then every honest man must admit that the workers are absolutely right in "attributing" to the idiocy of the capitalist system the ills with which this system rewards them for their wealth-creating labour. The proletarians are realising more and more clearly that bourgeois reality is justifying with frightening accuracy the words said by Marx and Engels in their *Communist Manifesto*:

"It [the bourgeoisie] is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society."

Caillaux is one of the hundreds of old fellows who continue to affirm that their bourgeois idiocy is the wisdom bestowed on man for all time, that he will never invent anything better, never go beyond it, never rise to higher pinnacles. And it was not so very long ago that the consolars of the bourgeoisie cited their science as proof of their economic wisdom and its stability.

Now they would exclude science from their vile game. On February 23, this same Caillaux, speaking in Paris before an audience of ex-Ministers, men like Paul

Milyukov and have-beens generally, said, in imitation of Spengler:

"Technology in many cases gives rise to unemployment, turns the wages of discharged workers into extra dividends for the shareholders. Science 'without conscience', science not warmed by 'conscience' works to man's detriment. Man must curb science. The present crisis is a defeat for human reason. Sometimes there is no bigger misfortune for science than a great man. He advances theoretical postulates which have meaning and significance at the particular time they are advanced, as in the case of Karl Marx, let us say. They are correct in 1848, or 1870, but are quite incorrect in 1932. If Marx were alive today he would not write as he did."

In these words, the bourgeois acknowledges that the intelligence of his class is debilitated and bankrupt. He recommends "curbing science", forgetting how much strength it has lent his class for the consolidation of its power over the labouring world. What does "curbing science" mean? Denying it freedom of research? There was a time when the bourgeoisie very bravely and effectively resisted the attacks of the Church on freedom of science. In our day bourgeois philosophy is gradually reverting to what it was in the most gloomy period of the Middle Ages—the handmaiden of theology. Caillaux is right when he says that Europe is menaced with a reversion to barbarism, as Marx, of whose teachings he is ignorant, predicted; yes, it is absolutely undeniable that the bourgeois of Europe, and of America, the mistress of the world, are with every year becoming more ignorant, intellectually emaciated and barbarous—and they themselves, as represented by you, realise it.

The idea of the possibility of a reversion to barbarism is most "fashionable" among the bourgeoisie nowadays. The Spenglers, the Caillaux and similar "thinkers" reflect the state of mind of thousands of philistines. This state of alarm arises from a presentiment of the doom of their class—from the fact that all over the world the revolutionary awareness of the working masses in the justice of their cause is growing. The bourgeois would prefer not to

believe in the revolutionary cultural development of the working people, but they see and feel it. It is an all-embracing process and superbly justified. It is a logical and inevitable development of the whole labour experience of mankind, of which the bourgeoisie's historians tell so edifyingly. But since history, too, is a science, it too must be "curbed", or—simpler still—its existence must be forgotten. This is the advice given by Paul Valéry, the French poet and academician, in his book, *Review of the Contemporary World*: he wants us to forget history, which he quite seriously blames for the calamities of the nations. He says that, by recalling the past, history gives rise to fruitless dreams and robs people of their tranquility. By people he means, of course, the bourgeoisie. Valéry is probably incapable of seeing any other people on earth. This is what he has to say about history, of which the bourgeoisie until very recently were so proud, and which they wrote so skilfully:

"History is the most dangerous of all the products elaborated in the chemical laboratory of our intellect. It stimulates dreams, it intoxicates nations, arouses in them false memories, exaggerates their reflexes, inflames their old wounds, robs them of tranquility and drives them to mania—megalomania or persecution mania."

In his capacity of consoler, he is, as you see, very radical. He knows that the bourgeoisie wants to live tranquilly, and that it considers itself entitled to destroy tens of millions of people so that it may live a tranquil life. It can easily, of course, destroy tens of thousands of books—for the libraries, like everything else on earth, are also under its control. Does history prevent a tranquil life? Then, away with history! Withdraw from circulation all books on history! Let it not be taught in the schools! Proclaim the study of the past a socially dangerous and even criminal thing! Let people with a propensity for historical research be proclaimed abnormal and have them deported to uninhabited islands.

The chief thing is tranquility! And that is the concern of all the consolers of the bourgeoisie. But to achieve tran-

quility, as Caillaux says, there must be mutual confidence among the capitalist marauders of the different nationalities; and for the establishment of confidence, it is necessary that the doors of other lands—China, for instance—be opened wide, so that they may be plundered by all the marauders and shopkeepers of Europe. But the shopkeepers and marauders of Japan want to shut these doors to all but themselves, on the ground that China is nearer to them than to Europe, and that it is more convenient for them to rob the Chinese than the Indians, whom the "gentlemen" of England are accustomed to rob. Rivalry in plunder gives rise to antagonisms, which are fraught with the danger of a new world war. What is more, as *Gringoire*, a Paris magazine says, "the Russian Empire has been lost to Europe as a normal and sound market". It is in this that *Gringoire* sees the "root of the evil", and, like many other journalists, politicians, bishops, lords, adventurers and swindlers, insists on the necessity for all-European intervention in the Soviet Union. Then, unemployment is steadily growing in Europe, and so is the proletariat's revolutionary awareness of the justice of its cause. It all comes to this, that there is very little chance of the establishment of "tranquility", and even, it seems, no place at all for it. But I, not being an optimist, and knowing that the cynicism of the bourgeoisie is unbounded, am prepared to recognise that there is one way by which the bourgeoisie may endeavour to clear itself a place for a tranquil life. Racist Deputy Berger hinted at this possibility in a speech in Cologne on February 19, when he said:

"If, after Hitler comes to power, the French attempt to occupy German territory, we shall cut the throats of all the Jews."

When the Prussian Government learned of this statement, it forbade Berger to make any more public speeches. This aroused a storm of indignation in the Hitler camp. One racist paper writes: "Berger cannot be accused of inciting people to unlawful actions: we shall cut the throats of the Jews on the basis of a law which we shall pass when we come to power."

This statement should not be regarded as a joke, as a German "witz". In its present state of mind the European bourgeoisie is quite capable of "passing a law" not only for the wholesale extermination of Jews, but for the extermination of all who think differently from it, and, above all, of all who do not act in accordance with its inhuman interests.

Entrapped in this "vicious circle", the intellectual consolers gradually lose their faculty for consoling, and themselves come to stand in need of consolation. They even turn for consolation to people who refuse to dispense alms on principle, because the bestowing of alms establishes the right to do so. The talent for "beautiful lying", which is their basic talent, is no longer capable of concealing the ugly cynicism of bourgeois reality. Some of them are beginning to feel that to amuse and console people who are fatigued from the exertion of plundering the world and who are alarmed by the growing sharpness of the proletariat's resistance to their villainous aims, people with whom an insensate thirst for wealth has assumed the character of raving lunacy and manifests itself in socially destructive forms—that to console and amuse such people is becoming not only a fruitless occupation, but one dangerous to the consolers themselves.

One might also point to the criminality of consoling dejected robbers and assassins. But I know that this argument will touch nobody's heartstrings—for it would be moralising, and moralising has been tabooed as super-erogatory. Far more to the point is the fact that in the present-day world the intellectual consoler is becoming that "middle" to which logic sternly denies existence.

An offspring of the bourgeoisie and a proletarian in social status, he seems to be awakening to the humiliating tragedy of his position as a servant of a class that is doomed to perish and, like the professional bandit and murderer, fully deserves to perish. He is beginning to realise this because the bourgeoisie is ceasing to need his services. He is continually hearing men of his fraternity trying to curry

favour with the bourgeoisie by asserting that there is an overproduction of intellectuals. He sees that the bourgeois is more readily inclined to turn for "consolation" to charlatans who prophesy the future than to philosophers and "thinkers". European newspapers are crammed with advertisements of chiromants, astrologers, casters of horoscopes, fakirs, yogis, graphologists, spiritualists and other mountebanks who are more ignorant even than the bourgeois themselves. Photography and the cinema are killing the art of painting, and artists, in order not to die of starvation, exchange their pictures for potatoes, bread and the cast-off clothing of the middle class. One Paris paper printed the following cheerful little item:

"Distress is very severe among Berlin artists, and there is no sign of alleviation. There is talk of organising artists' mutual aid, but what help can people give one another who earn nothing and who have no prospect of earning anything? Berlin art circles accordingly hailed with enthusiasm the original idea of a woman artist named Annot Jacobi, who suggests a system of direct barter. Let coal dealers supply fuel to artists in exchange for statues and pictures. Times will change, and the coal dealers will have no cause to regret their bargains. Let dentists exercise their art on artists. A good picture is never amiss in a dentist's waiting room. Butchers and dairymen should jump at the opportunity to do a good deed and at the same time acquire real art without cash outlay. A special bureau has been set up in Berlin to develop Annot Jacobi's idea and put it into practical effect."

The paper that reports this system of direct barter does not say that it is also being practised in Paris.

The cinema is gradually destroying the high art of the theatre. There is no need to dwell on the corrupting influence of the bourgeois cinema, because it is perfectly evident. Having exhausted every sentimental theme, it is beginning to make an exhibition of physical malformity.

"Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's Hollywood studios have collected an original troupe for work on the film 'Freaks'. It includes Ku-ku, the bird-girl who has a great resem-

blance to a stork; P. Robinson, the skeleton man; Martha, who was born with one arm and skillfully knits lace with her feet. The studios have acquired Shilze, the 'pin-headed woman', who has a normal body but an extraordinarily tiny head resembling a pin; Olga, a woman with a luxurious masculine beard; Josephine-Joseph, half-woman, half-man; the Hilton Siamese twins, dwarfs and Lilliputians."

The Barnays, Possarts, Mounet-Sullys and other artists of this category are no longer needed; they are being ousted by the Fairbanks, Harold Lloyds and other jugglers, headed by the monotonously sentimental and dreary Charlie Chaplin, just as classical music is being ousted by jazz, and Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens and Flaubert by the diverse Walaces, men with a faculty for telling how police detectives protect the property of big robbers and organisers of wholesale murder by catching petty thieves and murderers. In the field of art, the bourgeois is quite satisfied with collecting postage stamps and tramway tickets, or at the best, with collecting fake old masters. In the field of science, the bourgeois is interested in the cheapest and most convenient ways and methods of exploiting the physical energies of the working class; science exists for the bourgeois only to the extent that it is capable of contributing to his enrichment, regulating the functions of his stomach and intestines, and stimulating the sexual vigour of the looters. The bourgeois is incapable of understanding that it is the fundamental mission of science to promote intellectual development, to aid the repair of the human physique which capitalist oppression has undermined, to convert inert matter into energy, to study the mechanism of the structure and growth of the human organism. In all this the modern bourgeois is as little interested as the savage of Central Africa.

Seeing this, some intellectuals are beginning to realise that "creative culture"—which they considered their business, the product of their "free thought" and "independent will"—is no longer their business, and that *culture is not an inherent necessity for the capitalist world*. The events in China have reminded them of the destruction of the

University of Louvain and its library in 1914; the other day they learned of the destruction by Japanese guns in Shanghai of the T'ung tsi University, the Naval College, the School of Fishery, the National University, the Medical College, the Agricultural and Engineering Colleges and the Workers' University. No one is outraged by this barbarous act, just as no one is outraged by the curtailment of allocations for cultural institutions, which goes hand in hand with the steady increase of armaments.

But, of course, only a very small section of the European and American intellectuals feel that they must inevitably come under the "law of excluded middle" and are exercised by the question of whose side to take: whether, in accordance with old habit, the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, or, as honour dictates, the side of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. The majority of the intelligentsia continue to be content with serving capitalism—a master who, fully aware of the moral flexibility of his servants and consolers, and seeing the futility and sterility of their reconciliatory work, is beginning openly to despise them and already entertains doubt as to whether the existence of such servants and consolers is necessary.

I often receive letters from specialists in consoling the middle-class philistines. I shall quote one of them I received from Citizen Sven Elverstad:

"Dear Mr. Gorky,

"Terrible confusion and dismay, bordering on despair, now reigns all over the world, caused by the dreadful economic crisis which has stricken all countries of the earth. This world tragedy has prompted me to institute in the *Tidens Tegn*, the newspaper with the largest circulation in Norway, a series of articles with the object of infusing new spirit and hope into the millions of victims of this dreadful catastrophe. I have accordingly seen fit to apply to writers, artists, scientists and politicians with the request to give their opinion on the subject of the tragic condition of the people in the past two years. Every citizen in every country is faced with the alternative: either to perish under the drastic blows of a cruel fate, or to continue to fight in

the hope of a happy solution of the crisis. Everyone needs the hope that the present gloomy situation will end happily, and it will burn brightly in the bosom of each on reading the optimistic opinion of a man to whose words all are accustomed to listen attentively. I therefore take the liberty of requesting you to let me have your view on the present situation. It may not be more than three or four lines, but it will undoubtedly save very many from despair and imbue them with strength to face the future courageously.

"Yours respectfully, Sven Elverstad"

There are still plenty of people like the author of this letter, people who have not lost their naïve faith in the healing virtue of "two or three lines", in the virtue of a phrase. This faith is so naïve, it can hardly be sincere. Two or three phrases, or two or three hundred phrases will not infuse new life into the decrepit bourgeois world. Every day, in all the parliaments of the world and in the League of Nations, thousands of phrases are uttered, but they do not console or reassure anyone, do not inspire anyone with hope in the possibility of checking the elemental growth of the crisis of bourgeois civilisation. Ex-Ministers and other idlers tour the cities urging bourgeois society to "curb" and "discipline" science. These people's pratings are immediately seized upon by the journalists—men to whom "it's all the same, all a tedious game", and has been for a long time. And one of them, Emil Ludwig, writing in a serious paper, the *Daily Express*, advises mankind to "get rid of the specialists". And the petty bourgeois listens to and reads this vulgar nonsense, and draws his conclusions from it. And if European bourgeoisdom should decide that it is necessary to close the universities, it will not be surprising. Incidentally, it might argue the following fact in support: in Germany 6,000 posts requiring a university diploma fall vacant annually, but the German universities turn out some 40,000 graduates every year.

You, Citizens D. Smith and T. Morrison, are mistaken when you ascribe to bourgeois literature and journalism the role of "organiser of cultivated opinion". This "organiser"

is a parasitic growth which endeavours to cover up the sordid chaos of reality; but it does so less effectively than ivy or weeds, for example, cover up the rubbish and debris of ruins. You have a poor knowledge, citizens, of the cultural role of your press, which unanimously asserts that "the American is before all an American", and only after that a man. The German racist press, in its turn, teaches that a racist is before all an Aryan, and only after that a physician, geologist or philosopher. The French journalists argue that a Frenchman is before all a victor, and he must therefore be more strongly armed than others—referring, of course, not to the arming of the brain, but only of the fist.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the European and American press is zealously and almost exclusively engaged in depressing the cultural level of its readers, which is low enough as it is without its help. Serving the interests of the capitalists, their employers, and possessing the faculty of inflating a fly to the dimensions of an elephant, the journalists do not make it their aim to subdue the swine, although, of course, they see that the swine have gone raving mad.

You write: "When we were in Europe, we realised with deep bitterness that the Europeans hate us." This is very "subjective", and while subjectivism enabled you to discern a part of the truth, it concealed from you the whole truth: you failed to observe that all the bourgeois of Europe live in an atmosphere of mutual hatred. The spoliated Germans hate France, which, suffocating from a surfeit of gold, hates the British, just as the Italians hate the French, and all the bourgeois unanimously hate the Soviet Union. The three hundred million Indians are fired with hatred of the English lords and shopkeepers, the four hundred and fifty million Chinese hate the Japanese and all Europeans, who, being accustomed to rob China, are also prepared to hate the Japanese, who consider that robbing the Chinese is their exclusive prerogative. This hatred of all for all is growing and becoming ever denser and more pungent; it is swelling among the bourgeois like a festering sore, and it

will of course burst, and then possibly the best and most healthy blood of the peoples of the earth will flow in rivers again. Besides millions of the sturdiest individuals, war will destroy an enormous amount of wealth and the raw materials from which it is made, and will result in impoverishing the health of mankind and its metal and fuel resources. It goes without saying that war does not eliminate the mutual hatred between the national groups of bourgeoisie. You consider yourselves "capable of serving universal human culture", and feel yourselves "obligated to protect it from sinking into barbarism". That is very good. But ask yourselves the simple question: What can you do today or tomorrow to protect this culture, which, incidentally, never was "universally human", and cannot be when there are national-capitalist state organisations which are absolutely unaccountable to the working people, and which hound one nation against another?

Ask yourselves, for instance, what you can do to counteract such culture-destroying phenomena as unemployment, or the emaciating effect of hunger on the health of the working class, or the spread of child prostitution? Do you understand that emaciation of the masses means the emaciation of the soil from which culture springs? You are probably aware that the so-called cultivated stratum has always been a product of the masses. You should know that very well, because Americans are in the habit of boasting that in the USA newspaper boys can rise to the dignity of presidents.

I mention this only to note the astuteness of the boys, and not the talents of the presidents—about which I know nothing.

There is another question you would do well to ponder over: do you believe that the four hundred and fifty million Chinese can be turned into slaves of European and American capital, when the three hundred million Indians are beginning to realise that the role of slaves of Britain has by no means been ordained for them by the gods? Just consider: a few tens of thousands of marauders and adventurers want to live in tranquility for ever at the

expense of the energies of a billion toilers! But that is normal, you say? It was, and it is normal, but will you have the hardihood to say that it ought to be? The plague was also regarded as almost normal once, in the Middle Ages, but now the plague has practically disappeared, and its role on earth is being performed by the bourgeoisie, which is contaminating the whole coloured world, infecting it with a profound hatred and contempt for the white race. Does it not appear to you, the protectors of culture, that capitalism is provoking race wars?

You accuse me of "preaching hate", and advise me instead to "propagate love". You presumably think me capable of adjuring the workers: Love the capitalists, for they devour your strength; love them, for they fruitlessly dissipate the treasures of your earth; love these people who squander your iron on the making of the guns which destroy you; love the scoundrels thanks to whom your children are wasting away from starvation; love those who destroy you in order that they may themselves live in ease and satiety; love the capitalist, for his church keeps you in the darkness of ignorance.

Something similar is preached by the Bible, and, recalling this, you refer to "Christianity" as a "cultural lever". You are very much behind the times: honest people have long ceased to speak of the cultural influence of the "gospel of love and meekness". It is inappropriate and impossible to speak of this influence in our day, when the Christian bourgeoisie inculcates meekness both at home and in the colonies and compels its slaves to love it with the help of "fire and the sword", which it employs with greater energy than it ever did before. Nowadays, as you know, the sword has been replaced by machine-guns and bombs, and even by the "voice of God from on high". A Paris newspaper reports:

"In their war with the Afridis, the British have thought of a stunt which serves them in good stead. A body of rebels are taking refuge on a plateau amid inaccessible

mountains. Suddenly a plane appears above them flying at a very great height. The Afridis jump for their weapons. But no bombs fall. Instead, words pour down from the plane, and a voice from heaven, speaking persuasively in their vernacular, urges them to lay down their arms and cease their senseless contest against the British Empire. There have been quite a number of cases when, startled by the voice from heaven, the rebels really did give up the fight.

"The voice of God expedient was repeated in Milan on the anniversary of the founding of the fascist militia, when the whole city heard the Divine Voice pronouncing brief words of praise of fascism. Milanese who had had occasion to hear General Balbo speak recognised his baritone in the voice from heaven."

Thus a simple expedient has been found for proving the existence of God and utilising his voice for the subjugation of savages. It is to be anticipated that God will one day be heard over San Francisco or Washington, speaking in English with a Japanese accent.

You hold up as an example to me the "great men, the teachers of the Church". It is really funny, your saying this seriously. Let us not ask how, of what and why the great churchmen were made. But before leaning for support on them, you would do well to test their firmness and stability. In your disquisitions on the "Church" you betray that "American idealism" that can spring only from profound ignorance. In the present instance, your ignorance of the history of the Christian Church can only be explained by the fact that the inhabitants of the USA have never known from their own bitter experience that the church is an organisation for coercing the mind and conscience of man, and have never experienced this as poignantly as the inhabitants of Europe. You should acquaint yourselves with the bloody affrays that took place at the œcumenical councils, with the fiendishness, ambitiousness and selfishness of the "great Church teachers". You would learn quite a lot in particular from the story of the charlatanry at the Council of Ephesus. You should do some reading on the

history of heresies, acquaint yourselves with the extermination of "heretics" in the early centuries of Christianity, with the Jewish pogroms, with the massacres of the Albigenses and the Taborites, and with the bloody policy of the Church of Christ in general. Interesting for the undereducated is the history of the Inquisition, but not, of course, as given in the account of your fellow-countryman, Washington Lee, which was approved by the censorship of the Vatican, the initiator of the Inquisition. It is quite presumable that if you were to acquaint yourselves with all this, you would arrive at the conviction that the Church Fathers work very zealously to consolidate the power of a minority over the majority, and that if they fought heresies, it was because the heresies originated among the working masses, who instinctively sensed the mendacity of the churchmen. They preached a religion for slaves, a religion which the masters never accepted otherwise than through misunderstanding or from fear of the slaves. Your historian, van Loon, claims in an article on "great historical blunders" that the Church had to fight against, and not for, the teachings of the Gospels. He says that Titus committed a supreme blunder in destroying Jerusalem—for the Jews, driven out of Palestine, dispersed over the whole earth, and it was in the communities they founded that Christianity ripened and grew; and Christianity was no less fatal to the Roman Empire than the ideas of Marx and Lenin are to capitalist states.

So, in fact, it was, and so it is: the Christian Church fought the naïve communism of the Gospels—this is the sum and substance of its whole "history".

What is the Church doing in these days? Above all, of course, it prays. The Archbishop of York and the Archbishop of Canterbury—the man who preached something in the nature of a "crusade" against the Soviet Union—these two archbishops have compiled a new prayer, in which English hypocrisy is consummately combined with English humour. It is a rather longish compilation, constructed in the style of the prayer "Our Father". The archbishops appeal to God in the following words:

"Concerning the policy of Our Government for the restoration of credit and prosperity, Thy will be done. Concerning all that is being undertaken for the future constitution of India, Thy will be done. Concerning the forthcoming disarmament conference and all that is being undertaken to establish peace on earth, Thy will be done. Concerning the restoration of trade, credit and mutual amity, give us this day our daily bread. Concerning the co-operation of all classes for the common weal, give us this day our daily bread. If we have been guilty of national pride and have found greater satisfaction in ruling over others than in assisting them to the best of our ability, forgive us our sins. If we have displayed selfishness in the conduct of our affairs and have placed our interests and the interests of our class above the interests of others, forgive us our sins."

A typical prayer of frightened shopkeepers! In the course of it they pray God about a dozen times to "forgive" them their "sins", but not once do they say that they are willing or able to cease committing them. And only in one instance do they ask God's "forgiveness":

"That we have succumbed to national arrogance, finding satisfaction in ruling over others, and not in the ability to serve them, O Lord, forgive us!"

Forgive us this sin, but we cannot cease from sinning—that is what they say. But this prayer for forgiveness was rejected by the majority of the English clergymen; they considered it would be awkward and humiliating for them to read it.

This prayer was to be "offered up" to the throne of the British God on January 2, in St. Paul's Cathedral, London. Clergymen who did not find the prayer to their liking received permission from the Archbishop of Canterbury not to read it.

So you see what vulgar and stupid comedies the Christian Church has come to be capable of, and how amusingly the clergy have degraded their God to the level of a senior shopkeeper and participator in all the commercial transactions of the best shopkeepers of Europe. But it would be

unfair to speak only of the English clergy and to forget that the Italian have founded a Bank of the Holy Ghost, and that in France, on February 15, in Mulhouse, as the Paris newspaper of the Russian émigrés reports:

"The police authorities ordered the arrest of the manager and salesman of a bookshop run by the Catholic Union Publishing House, which is directed by Abbé Egy. The shop sold pornographic photographs and books imported from Germany. The 'goods' have been confiscated. Some of the books are not only pornographic, but abuse and revile religion."

Facts of this kind could be cited by the hundred, and they are all indicative of one thing: that the Church, the servant of its patron and master, capitalism, is infected with the same diseases that are destroying capitalism. And if it may be assumed that there was a time when the bourgeoisie did "reckon with the moral authority of the Church", it has to be admitted that this was the authority of a "policeman of the spirit", the authority of one of the organisations which served for the oppression of the working people. The Church "consoled", you say? I don't deny it. But this consolation is one of the methods of extinguishing reason.

No, preaching to the poor to love the rich, to the worker to love his master, is not my trade. I am not capable of consoling. I know too well and have known for too long that the whole world is permeated by an atmosphere of hate, and I see it becoming ever denser, ever more active and beneficent.

It is time you "humanitarians who want to be practical men" realised that two hates are operating in the world: one arose among the marauders, from their mutual competition, as well as from their fear of the future, which is fraught with inevitable doom for the marauders; the other—the hate of the proletariat—springs from its loathing for life as it is, and is being ever more brightly illumined by consciousness of its right to rule. These two hates have developed to such a pitch of intensity that nothing and nobody can reconcile them, and nothing but the inevitable

battle between the classes that are their physical exponents, nothing but the victory of the proletarians, can rid the world of hate.

You write: "Like many others, we think that in your country the dictatorship of the workers leads to coercion of the peasants". I would advise you to think like the few—like those, still very few, intellectuals who are already beginning to understand that the teachings of Marx and Lenin are the pinnacle attained by the scientific thought that studies social phenomena honestly, and that only from the pinnacle of these teachings is the direct road to social justice, to new forms of culture, plainly visible. Make a little effort and forget, if only for a while, your kinship with the class whose whole history is one long tale of physical and spiritual coercion of the mass of labouring humanity—the workers and peasants. Make this effort, and you will understand that your class is your enemy. Karl Marx was a very wise man, and it would be a mistake to think that he appeared in the world like Minerva from the head of Jupiter. No, his teachings are just as much a coping-stone placed by genius on scientific experience as the theories of Newton and Darwin were. Lenin is easier than Marx, and, as a teacher, no less wise. They will show you the class you serve, first in its power and glory; they will show you how, by means of inhuman coercion, it worked to build, and did build, a "culture" that suites it out of blood, cant and lies; and then they will show you the process of decay of this culture. Its subsequent, present-day, corruption you can see for yourselves—after all, it is precisely this process that inspires the alarm that finds expression in your letter to me.

Let us talk of "coercion". The dictatorship of the proletariat is a temporary thing; it is necessary in order to re-educate and convert the tens of millions of former slaves of nature and of the bourgeois state into the one and only master of their country and of all its wealth. The dictatorship of the proletariat will cease to be necessary when all the working people, all the peasantry, will be living in equal social and economic conditions, and when it will be

possible for every individual to work in accordance with his abilities and receive in accordance with his needs. "Coercion", as you and "many others" conceive it, is a misunderstanding; but more often it is a lie and calumny against the working class of the Soviet Union and its Party. "Coercion", as applied to the social process going on in the Soviet Union, is a term used by the enemies of the working class with the object of discrediting its cultural work—the work of regenerating its country and organising new economic forms.

In my view, it would be right to talk of compulsion, which is an entirely different thing from coercion; for, surely, you do not coerce children when you teach them to be literate? The working class of the Soviet Union and its Party are teaching the peasantry to be socially and politically literate. Just in the same way you, the intellectuals, are compelled by somebody or something to feel the tragedy of your position "between the hammer and the anvil"; you, too, are taught the elements of social and political literacy by somebody—and that somebody, of course, is not I.

In all countries the peasantry—the millions of small owners—constitute a soil from which marauders and parasites spring; capitalism, in all its monstrous ugliness, grew from this soil. All the energies, abilities and talents of the peasant are absorbed in his concern for his beggarly property. The cultural idiocy of the small owner is fully equal to that of the millionaire—you, the intellectuals, should see and feel this very well. In Russia, before the October Revolution, the peasants lived in seventeenth-century conditions, and this is a fact which even the Russian émigrés will not venture to deny, even though their incensement against the Soviet regime has assumed ludicrous and preposterous proportions.

The peasants must not be fourth-rate, semi-savage people; they must not be a prey of the astute muzhik, the landlord and the capitalist; they must not slave like convicts on tiny, highly-divided plots of exhausted land that is incapable of feeding its beggarly, illiterate owner—

who is not in a position to manure his land, employ machines for its cultivation, or to develop the science of agriculture. The peasants must not justify the dismal Malthusian theory, at the bottom of which, in my opinion, lies the fiendishness of clerical thought. If the peasants, in their mass, are still incapable of understanding the reality and humiliation of their position, it is the duty of the working class to imbue them with a consciousness of it, even if by compulsion. However, there is no need for this, because the peasant of the Soviet Union, who suffered the torments of the shambles of 1914-18, and who was awakened by the October Revolution, is no longer blind and is capable of thinking practically. He is being supplied with machines and fertilisers, the road to all schools is open to him, and every year thousands of peasant children enter on the careers of engineers, agronomists and physicians. The peasant is beginning to understand that the working class, as represented by its Party, is striving to create a single master in the Soviet Union, a master with 160,000,000 heads and 320,000,000 hands—and that is the chief thing he needs to understand. The peasant sees that everything done in his country is done for all, and not for a small group of wealthy people; the peasant sees that in the Soviet Union only that is being done which is useful to him, and that the country's twenty-six agricultural research institutes are working to enhance the fertility of his land and to lighten his labour.

The peasant does not want to live in squalid villages, as he has done for centuries, but in agricultural cities, where there are good schools and crèches for his children, and theatres, clubs, libraries and cinemas for himself. The peasant is conceiving a growing thirst for knowledge and a growing taste for cultivated living. If the peasant did not understand all this, then the work in the Soviet Union would not in these fifteen years have achieved the magnificent results that have been achieved by the combined energies of the workers and peasants.

In the bourgeois countries, the working people are a mechanical power, and, in their mass, are ignorant of the

cultural significance of their labour. The bosses in your country are the trusts, organisations of plunderers of the national energies, of parasites on the working people. Warring among themselves, operating with money and trying to ruin one another, they engineer tragic stock-exchange swindles—and now, at last, their anarchism has plunged the country into an incredible crisis. Millions of workers are dying of starvation, the health of the nation is being fruitlessly dissipated, infant mortality is growing disastrously, suicide is on the increase, and the basic soil of culture, its living human energy, is becoming exhausted. And, notwithstanding this, your Senate turned down the La Follette-Costigan Bill for the appropriation of 375 million dollars for immediate aid to the unemployed, while the *New York American* publishes figures showing that in New York 153,731 unemployed and their families were evicted from their homes for non-payment of rent in 1930, and 198,738 in 1931. In New York, in January of this year, hundreds of unemployed were evicted from their homes daily.

In the Soviet Union, the administrators and legislators are the workers and that section of the peasantry who have come to understand the necessity for abolishing private ownership of land and for socialising and mechanising the cultivation of the fields, who have come to understand that they must psychologically remake themselves into workers of the same kind as those that work in the mills and factories, in other words, they must become the genuine and sole masters of the country. The number of peasant collectivists and Communists is growing continuously. It will grow still faster as the new generation rids itself of the heritage of serfdom and of the superstitions born of centuries of slavish existence.

In the Soviet Union the laws are made from below, they originate among the working masses, and flow from the conditions of their vital activity; the Soviet Government and the Party formulate and legislatively enact only that which matures in the processes of labour of the workers and peasants—labour, whose principal aim is to create a

society of equals. The Party is the dictator only to the extent that it is the organising centre, the neuro-cerebral system of the working masses; the aim of the Party is to convert as swiftly as possible the largest possible proportion of physical energy into intellectual energy, so as to provide freedom and scope for the development of the talents and abilities of every individual and of the entire mass of the population.

The bourgeois state, being committed to individualism, assiduously educates the youth in the spirit of its own interests and traditions. That, of course, is natural. But we find that it is precisely among the youth of bourgeois society that anarchist ideas and theories most frequently arose and arise—and that is unnatural and indicative of the abnormal and unhealthy state of an environment in which people are stifled, and consequently begin to dream of the total destruction of society in order to achieve unlimited liberty for the individual. As you are aware, your youth not only dream of this but act accordingly: in the press of Europe we find more and more frequent reports of “pranks”—pranks of a criminal nature—played by your and its own bourgeois youth. These crimes are not prompted by material want, but by the “tedium of life”, by curiosity, by an urge for “thrills”, and at the bottom of all these crimes lies a very low opinion of the individual and his life. Absorbing into its midst the most talented progeny of the workers and peasants, and compelling them to serve its interests, the bourgeoisie boasts of the “freedom” of the individual to attain a “certain personal prosperity”—a comfortable den, a snug hole. But you will not deny, of course, that in your society thousands of talented people perish on the way to vulgar prosperity, being incapable of overcoming the obstacles placed in their way by the conditions of bourgeois life. The literature of Europe and America is full of descriptions of gifted people who come to a fruitless end. The history of the bourgeoisie is the history of its spiritual impoverishment. What talents can it boast of in our times? It has nothing to boast of but diverse Hitlers, pigmies stricken with megalomania.

The peoples of the Soviet Union are entering an era of renaissance. The October Revolution aroused tens of thousands of talented people to vital activity, but they are still all too few for the accomplishment of the great aims the working class has set itself. There are no unemployed in the Soviet Union, and everywhere, in all spheres of human endeavour, the forces are still inadequate, although they are increasing with a speed never and nowhere witnessed before.

You, the intellectuals, the “masters of culture”, would do well to realise that once the working class takes political power into its own hands, it will open for you the broadest opportunities for creative cultural endeavour.

See what a stern lesson history administered to the Russian intellectuals: they refused to side with their working people, and now they are rotting in impotent fury, putrefying in exile. Soon they will become totally extinct, and will be remembered only as traitors.

The bourgeoisie is inimical, and can no longer be anything but inimical, to culture—this is a truth that is confirmed by bourgeois reality, by the whole practice of the capitalist states. The bourgeoisie rejected the Soviet Union's project for general disarmament, and this alone is sufficient to justify us in saying that the capitalists are socially dangerous people, that they are preparing for a new world war. They are keeping the Soviet Union in a tense state of defence, compelling the working class to spend a vast amount of precious time and material on the production of weapons of defence against the capitalists, who are organising to attack the Soviet Union and to turn this huge country into their colony, their market. The peoples of the Soviet Union have to spend on self-defence against the capitalists a vast amount of energy and means which might with undeniable benefit be used to promote the cultural regeneration of mankind, for the construction process in the Soviet Union is of importance to all mankind.

The putrid environment of a bourgeoisie gone crazy from hate and from fear of the future is producing increasing numbers of idiots who have absolutely no idea of the

significance of what they are crying. One of them turns to the "gentlemen, the rulers and diplomats of Europe" with appeals like this: "The time has come for Europe to use the yellow race to crush the Third International." It is quite likely that this idiot blurted out the dreams and intentions of "gentlemen", of "diplomats and rules", of his own kidney. It is quite possible that there are "gentlemen" who are seriously thinking of doing what this idiot cried aloud. Europe and America are ruled by irresponsible "gentlemen". The events in India, China, Indo-China may well contribute to the growth of racial hatred towards the Europeans and the "whites" in general. This will be a third hate, and you, the humanitarians, would do well to ponder whether you, or your children, need it. And what good are you likely to derive from the preaching of "race purity"—that is, again of race hatred—in Germany? Here is a specimen:

"Sauckel, the Nazi leader in Thuringia, has ordered the National-Socialist group in Weimar to protest against the arrival in that city of Gerhart Hauptmann, Thomas Mann, Walter von Molo and Professor Henri Lichtenberger of the Sorbonne for the forthcoming centenary of the death of Goethe. Sauckel accuses them of non-Aryan extraction."

And it is likewise high time for you to decide the simple question: on whose side are you, "masters of culture"? Are you with the handiworkers of culture, and for the creation of new forms of life; or are you against them, and for the perpetuation of a caste of irresponsible marauders, a caste which has decayed from the head downward, and which continues to function only from inertia?

1932

Letters

(Selected passages)

*To William D. Haywood
and Charles Moyer,
Leaders of the Western
Federation of Miners*

Between 10 and 12 April, 1906, New York.

I salute you, brother-socialists! Take courage! The day of justice and the liberation of the oppressed in all the world is nigh.

Yours, forever fraternally,
M. Gorky

Hotel Belleclaire

To Editors of New York Newspapers

Middle of April, 1906, New York.

I think that this unseemly sally against me could not have come from the Americans, my respect for whom will not permit me to suspect them of discourtesy towards a woman. I imagine that this filth has been inspired by one of the friends of the Russian government.

My wife is my wife, the wife of M. Gorky. Both she and I consider it beneath our dignity to go into any explana-

tions on this matter. Everyone, of course, has the right to say and think anything he likes about us, and we shall exercise our human right to ignore gossip.

To L. B. Krasin

Beginning of May, 1906, New York.

...Now that certain headway has been made I can give you something like an account of what's been happening.

I was met here with great pomp and ceremony, and the first 48 hours the whole of New York was flooded with articles about me and the aim of my visit.

The *World* published an article accusing me of bigamy in the first place, and anarchist views, in the second. There was a picture of my first wife and children, abandoned by me to their fate and now starving. A disgraceful fact. Everyone shied away from me. I was thrown out of three hotels. One American writer put me up, and I wondered what now? My companions lost heart. The papers began to talk about the need to deport me. However, the best and the most influential papers, such as the *Tribune*, *Times* and *N. Y. Herald*, said nothing. Nor did the *American* for whom I promised to write 15 articles about Russia. We've got to live. There are four of us, and everything is counted in dollars here. The preference I gave to the *American* annoyed the other newspapers, and they began to kick.

My committee includes Prof. Giddings, the author of a sociological treatise that has been translated into Russian; Prof. Martin, a Fabian socialist who is very popular with all the classes; a certain financier whose name I can't articulate; the head of a rubber syndicate, and more people of different ranks, altogether about 50. They are trying very hard and they will do a lot of good, provided I stay here till the autumn and learn to speak English. I'll carry out the first condition of course, and make a try at the second one. In the meantime, I'm endeavouring to borrow fifty thousand dollars from the committee which I shall

remit to you. We'll reimburse them in the autumn. I'll make the first remittance soon, not the whole sum at once.

The committee is built to last. It's going to be called Friends of the Russian People, and one of the biggest banks will be appointed treasurers. I am to use the money at my discretion, it will be given to me against my personal receipts. Eventually I shall have to name the institution to whom I hand over the money, with the receipt acknowledged in writing. The best people on the committee know what that institution will be, but it doesn't frighten them, though they, too, are . . . "moralists". You know, everything is so very American here, that no one will stop at anything. Even the local Social-Democrats, a very strict lot, will devour you, boots and all, if you don't look out. The ones who are a bit more decent aren't Americans and so they're no good at anything. At the moment, all the socialists, with Morris Hillquit at the lead, want me to appear everywhere as a socialist, they insist on it.

I asked them: "But will the bourgeois give us money then?" "No," they replied. "I'd better not appear in that capacity if that's the case." "Then we'll run you down in our papers." "If you do, the bourgeois will give me even more money, because it will be obvious to them that I'm not a socialist, just someone who craves a political revolution, that's all. As for your running down, I'll endure it. I've endured worse things." They laughed and said I was growing into an American.

I am sure that I will get a lot of money after all, and that's the most important thing.

Please keep me posted about what's happening in Russia. It's a misery, I feel like a blind man. Some valuable Americans refused to take part in the committee simply because the Duma is going to be convened. I've got to explain to these damned people that it's not a Duma, it's just rubbish, but the newspapers are mailed to me only every so often, and I have no journals. I've no idea what's going on in the Party.

For example, I need some books about Siberia. Send me a book or an article about the import of goods to the

Primorye, Amur and Ussuri regions. I need them, honestly.

Herman sends his regards, and so does Maria Fyodorovna. What a swipe they took at her!

Address your letters to: Mr. John Martin (for me), Staten Island, New York,

Well, good luck.

I'll be back—where?—in December or January.

A.

To K. P. Pyatnitsky

May 1, 1906, New York.

You want to know, my dear friend, when we intend to return to Europe. I have already written you that it will not be soon, anyway not before November, I think. If any good is to come of this trip, I must stay here till the autumn.

In the summer I shall go away into the mountains and work there. Now, how about you coming here? We are given a whole house entirely to ourselves up in the mountains, and we'd live there in clover. Think it over. Honestly, you ought to make the effort and pull up your roots. America is really something, you know. Not everyone has the good fortune to see it. It's amazingly interesting here. And damned beautiful, which came as a surprise for me. About three days ago we drove round New York in a car, and I have to tell you that the banks of the Hudson are powerfully impressive and lovely. Quite moving, in fact. The cars here fly so fast that you have to hold on to your head with your hands if you don't want the wind to rip it off.

I still have spokes put in my wheels, but I have already become somewhat used to it and now I, too, put out my foot to trip up others when it can be safely done. Next time we meet you shall see a real American crook—and that will be me.

I write, read synopses, and learn to speak English. It's

as difficult as pulling out nails with your teeth. You have to memorise the pronunciation and spelling of each single word: these sticklers to rules speak the language of anarchists—there's not a single rule in it!

I've read the Russian papers where they run down the Americans because of me. I'm terribly touched. I have written a letter to the *Twentieth Century* gently hinting to my well-wishers that they missed the point somewhat.

Would you be so kind and mail me the 3rd vol. of Shelley (address it to Mr. John Martin, Staten Island, N. Y.).

The desire to read English poets is very strong in me here. You will send me the book, won't you? Well, give my regards to everyone. Maybe you'll come here, after all? It would be wonderful, I really mean it. There is so much that's original here, if you only knew!

Time for bed. Maria Fyodorovna is at a meeting, and I must prepare for another one tomorrow. I shake your hand, and wish you to come to America.

It won't be a waste of time!

A.

To A. U. Amfiteatrov

Middle of May, 1906, New York.

Dear Alexander Valentinovich,

For a number of reasons I have to decline the invitation to come to Paris. On the 19th I have my meeting in Philadelphia, another one in Boston on the 21st, after that New York, and so on. My affairs here are going rather more slowly than I expected, and so I shall have to stay on until the police kicks me out or I am ready to leave having done my very best. At present I am writing a Book of Interviews. In it there are my conversations with Vasily Fyodorovich, with Kaiser, with France, Nicholas the Second, with a multimillionaire, with Prometheus, Wandering Jew, with a corpse, a professional sinner, and other curious characters. America is a country where one wishes one had 4 heads and 32 hands in order to work, work and

work! One feels like a bomb that keeps exploding all the time, with the container remaining intact and the contents shooting out. Honestly, this is a wonderful country for someone who can work and wants to work.

All the best. I'm waiting for your magazine—has it come out? My best regards to your wife.

My address is: Mr. John Martin, Grymes Hill, Staten Island, N. Y.

To Y. P. Peshkova

May 28, 1906, Philadelphia.

See what posh hotels I patronise? I have to.

There's no respect for socialists here. You'll never get a room in a second-rate hotel. So you have to impress them with the sum you're willing to pay for a room—here, everything is judged by money, everything is forgiven for money, everything is sold for money. A remarkable country, I will tell you! Everybody is obsessed with this truly morbid passion for gold, some are repulsive in their ugliness, and others are often pitiful and funny. I'm here with my secretary, a very nice young chap. I have a meeting at the Opera House today. After the meeting I'll be off to Boston, I have two appointments there.

Afterwards I shall go to the Adirondacks to rest and write until the autumn. I'm going to write a novel. I have finished a book *My Interviews* which is made up of short, satirical conversations with Wilhelm the Second, Nicholas the Second, France, and American king, and so on. I have also started a small book of feature stories about the local way of life. By and large I'm working hard. I do not have it easy here, but then it's as exciting as being in hell.

I have raised all my sails and it seems that I shall be sailing the seas for a long time. Would you find out what action the Moscow procurator's office is bringing against me?

Teach Maxim French—it's rotten not to know languages. My best! Kiss the children, and so forth.

My address is Mr J. Martin, Grymes Hill, Staten Island, New York.

All the very, very best.

To K. P. Pyatnitsky

June 27, 1906, New York.

Dear Friend,

These four articles will be printed in the August issues of American magazines.

By way of news I must tell you that I have been robbed by Mr. Hearst, a candidate for the presidency and a socialist. Think of the honour for a mere workman. The Russian embassy is doing its damndest to get me deported; the bourgeois press publishes articles telling the reading public that I'm an anarchist and ought to be given a kick across the ocean.

Please send the money to Helsingfors, as quickly as possible.

I'm leaving for the Adirondacks the day after tomorrow. Write to the old address.

A. P.

To I. P. Ladyzhnikov

June 27, 1906, New York.

Dear Comrade,

The enclosed four articles will appear in American magazines in August. What can I do if the Americans only read things about America!

The Russian embassy is insisting in Washington that I be deported from America, there are crowds of detectives following me—an awful lot!—I get letters written in good enough Russian warning me that I shall be killed. This proves that I am going to make a success, after all. I act through letters—I have mailed a circular appeal for money to all the towns.

I'm leaving for the Adirondacks the day after tomorrow where I'll stay till the end of August, and in July—or maybe earlier—I'll send you my play. There, in the Adirondacks, I'll go on writing letters to different people and to all the workers' organisations in America.

I receive the newspapers occasionally—just think what a joy it is!

I wish you all the best. I shall be writing more articles about America. As a matter of fact, I work very hard but with little result.

My regards to Katerina Ivanovna. We're all well.

A. Peshkov

To I. P. Ladyzhnikov

End of August, 1906, the Adirondacks.

Dear Ivan Pavlovich,

I have sold my *Interviews* to a magazine for five thousand dollars. I'll send you the original contract, and then would you suggest to this firm to publish a complete collection of my works? I am very much read here—the other day, my *Foma* came out in its 17th edition, with a printing of 5 thousand copies at a go. This is tremendous! Bellamy only sold 6 thousand, and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* only 3 thousand, and yet he caused a sensation throughout America!

By and large, the book business is in a bad way here. Disgracefully so. The local socialists gasp when I name the number of copies in which socialist literature comes out in Russia.

D'you know what I'll tell you? We're far ahead of this free America for all our misfortunes. This becomes especially apparent when you compare the local farmer or workman with our peasants and workmen.

What idiots are all those Tverskoys and other Russian authors like him who write about America!

However, that's philosophy. As for reality—I'm dog tired.

I'll finish my story soon.

Best regards.

We're all well.

A. Peshkov

To K. P. Pyatnitsky

End of August, 1906, the Adirondacks.

Dear Friend,

I have sent Ladyzhnikov my play *Enemies* asking him to forward it to you as soon as convenient. I'm finishing my novel *Mother*. I did not send the play to you direct because I was afraid it might not reach you. The life you're leading is so very noisy and boisterous that I fear the authorities read your correspondence.

It will be a long time before there's a revolution here, unless it comes crashing down on the dumb skulls of the local multimillionaires in about ten years from now. My, what an interesting country! You should see what these devils are doing, how they work, how full they are of energy, ignorance, smugness and barbarity! I admire them and I curse them, I feel sick and gay and damned amused! Do you want to be a socialist? Come here then. The need for socialism has been revealed with fateful clarity.

Do you want to be an anarchist? You can become one within a month, I assure you.

Actually, coming here people turn into stupid, greedy animals. At the sight of all these riches, they bare their teeth and go about like that until they either become millionaires or starve to death in the effort.

And the emigrants! They are horrible. They're not at all like those people who made America. Today's emigrant is simply Europe's rubbish, its waste matter, a lazy, cowardly, impotent little manikin drained of energy without which there's no getting on here. A modern emigrant is incapable of making life, all he can do is look for a ready-made, safe and smug existence. The best thing is to

drown such emigrants in the ocean, and when I'm elected to the Senate I'll put this proposal to the vote.

We live in the Adirondacks, as I believe I have already told you in my last letter to which I never received a reply either. These mountains are covered with a leaf-bearing forest. The highest point is 1,500 metres, from there you have a view of the lake. Not bad at all. There's a philosophy school a mile away from us. The professors who live nearby try to make a bit of money, seeing it's vacation time, and deliver lectures on all the known sciences. You pay 10 dollars a week and listen to six lectures, in addition to which you are also fed, but mainly with grass. The audience sits in a small hall—so boring!—and listens to a lecture on psychology—so boring!—read by little Professor Morris—so boring! "Metaphysics, ladies and gentlemen! What is metaphysics? Each word, any word at all, is a symbol, ladies and gentlemen. When I say metaphysics I imagine a staircase starting from the ground and disappearing in space. When I say psychology I seem to see a row of columns." It's true, word for word. I'd like to bash him over the head with a column! I met James, Channing and others. James is a nice old chap, but he, too, is an American. Oh, blast them all. They're a funny lot, especially when they call themselves socialists.

I've sold my *Interviews* to the magazines for five thousand. Do you need any money? I'll also sell my play.

I say, do drop me a line for a change.

I wish you never to see America, and it's a good wish, believe me.

The earth is a very jolly place for a frivolous person like me. And how about you? What I mean to say is how do you feel?

Well, all the best, the very best.

I'd like to have a chat with you. Actually, you're the only person one can talk with about everything, as I know very well.

There are so many people! And so sadly few humans. Au revoir.

A.

To A. U. Amfiteatrov

End of August, 1900, the Adirondacks.

Dear A. V.,

I'm working on my novel. I am also observing American culture with the avid curiosity of a savage. On the whole it makes me sick, but sometimes I laugh like mad. I already feel able to write a certain something about America for which I'll be kicked out of here.

They're an amazing people, you know. No matter what I publish here, they object to it at once, pasting the ruder objections on the gate of the farm where I live. When they see me in the road they jump out of the way like grasshoppers. It's very amusing. The best objections come from the senators.

I expect to be in Paris in November.

In the meantime, au revoir.

Just let me finish *Mother*, and then I'll send you a short story "with the scene set in America"—see if I don't!

With best regards to both of you,

A. Peshkov

To A. U. Amfiteatrov

Early September (not later than the 6th), 1906, the Adirondacks.

My wretched health leaves much to be desired, but I'm used to it and it doesn't interfere with my life or work. I'm writing my novel, and holding receptions for the Americans.

They are full of admiration for the behaviour of the Duma. Used as they are to dealing with large numbers, it surprises them that only 3 out of 450 turned traitor. Big businessmen and people of substance say that if the tsar is overthrown in Russia, the Americans will give financial support to whatever government is set up in his place. It's clear to them now that Russians are capable of self-government. . . . If you could only imagine what a dull, dreary and ignorant people they are! It's amazing and fantastic.

They have again started reviling me in the newspapers—I published an article about New York in one of the local magazines and entitled it *The City of the Yellow Devil*. They didn't like it. The senators pen their objections, and the workers laugh. A certain person has publicly voiced his dismay: people used to speak ill of America after they had left it, and nowadays they don't speak well of it even while remaining in the country—what does this mean? I imagine I'll be kicked out in the end. Still, I'll get my money.

I wish you'd supply me with the most exciting literature, cuttings from the Russian papers at least. You must have many of them. We are famished for news from Russia. I do get the newspapers but they are held up for a very long time somewhere on the way.

I shall cross the ocean in the autumn, probably in October, but I don't know where I shall go. If things go well I'll come even earlier. I'll see you, of course. My best regards to your wife, and my greetings to our Russian and Gallic comrades. I shall try to send you something for the 5th book as well.

Yours ever,

A. Peshkov

To Y. P. Peshkova

Late August or early September, 1906, the Adirondacks.

I sent you a letter and received yours with the photographs of the children. Just in time!

Maxim has interesting eyes, and they must be beautiful too. Tell him I'll bring him some real Red Indian arrows and a bow, if I can find one. And also some American butterflies, they are quite wonderful here. There's nothing else, for everything beautiful comes from Europe. America itself is too young to understand the meaning of beauty. I live practically on the Canadian border, and I shall probably go over to Canada to take a look at the Dukhobory sect and the Red Indians. The Indians and the Negroes are

the most interesting people here, as for the Americans themselves they are only curious because of their amazing ignorance and their disgusting greed for money.

It looks as though I shall be involved in a court case with a probable candidate for the presidency whom I should like to sue for swindling.

If you only knew, if you could see how I live here! You'd die laughing or be struck speechless. I am the most terrible person in the country and, as one newspaper writes, "the country has never known such disgrace and humiliation as it now has piled upon it by this mad Russian anarchist who was born without morals and who astonishes everyone with his hatred for religion, law and order, and last but not least for people." Another paper carried an appeal to the Senate to have me deported. The yellow press is in a frenzy. The most vehement sallies against me are actually stuck on the gate of the house where I live. Even you have not been spared!

And in spite of all this, mind you, the papers are begging, literally clamouring for my articles. They're good business, and good business means everything here.

Did I tell you that my article about New York called forth more than 1,200 protests? From senators, too. I can imagine what's going to happen when my interviews and other articles about America appear in print!

I live in the forest, in a very lonely spot, it's 18 miles to Elizabethtown, the nearest town, but the Americans come here to get a look at me notwithstanding. They are afraid to come into the house—an acquaintance with me might be compromising, and so they hang about the woods waiting for a chance meeting. There are five of us in the house: myself, Zina, the Russian who came with me as my secretary, a professor of physics, and Miss Brooks, a nice old spinster. We have no servants, we cook our own food, and do everything ourselves. I wash the dishes; Zina gets the provisions riding a horse to town; the professor makes the tea and the coffee, and so on. I do the cooking sometimes—I make *pelmeni*, or cabbage soup or something. We get up at seven in the morning, I begin to work at 8

and work till 12, we have lunch at 1 p.m., tea at 4, and dinner at 8, after which I work again till midnight. The Russian comrade is a graduate of the conservatoire and he plays the piano very well indeed. We have concerts from 6 to 7.30. At the moment we are making a study of Scandinavian music—Grieg, Ole Olsen, Ludvig Schytte and others.

I have sold all my things to the American magazines at 16 cents a word which works out at about two thousand dollars for our signature of 30,000 letters. Time flies when one is busy working.

I live apart from the rest in a large barn with an iron stove and no ceiling. Two of the walls are glass—huge frames that can be raised, which I do when I go to bed. My back aches from too much sitting at the writing table, now and again I find it difficult to breathe, I have lost a lot of weight, I have become sunburnt and I have shaved my head. But on the whole my health is quite passable.

Not far from us there's a philosophy school which functions only in summer—three months a year. It was founded by Professor Dewey. There is no systematic course of study and lectures are read by anyone who happens to be there. The other day there was a lecture by James, a psychologist, who is considered one of the brightest lights here. I met him, he's quite a nice old man. Giddings, a sociologist, is very good, and I've made friends with him.

English culture is an extremely interesting thing. What amazes me in it is that political freedom exists alongside utter spiritual slavery. Corpses are the breath of life to them, and they worship authority like savages.

The day after tomorrow a certain John Martin is expecting about a hundred people, Fabian socialists, I believe. I'll look at them. They're coming to my place for tea.

Well, so much for the pattern of my life and my thoughts. Not all my thoughts, though! The mind works very energetically here. I live in a state of high excitement all the time, I have an endless amount of work before me, enough to last me for 16 years at least.

It's time I got down to some serious work, that's what I do feel. All these hasty writings of mine are worth very little.

Well, au revoir, my kind friend. Thanks again for everything. From the bottom of my heart.

It will take this letter 15 days to reach you. And your reply will come in another 15 days after that.

Please write. Only I'll leave this place in the beginning of October—it's been decided. So write to me at the following address:

Bühnen- und Buchverlag russischer Autoren J. Ladysch-nikow, Berlin W. 15 Uhlandstr. 145.

Ivan Pavlovich will forward the letters to me, he always knows where to find me.

Well, au revoir. I'll be very glad to see you. Kiss Maxim for me. Has he been getting the postcards with the Indians? I often sent them.

The best, the very best of everything. Fortitude, above all else. It's the best, the most precious thing of all.

Yours, A.

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